MERCY COLLEGE LIBRARIES
555 BROADWAY
DOBBS FERRY, N. Y. 10522

the American Scholar

WINTER 1993 PRICE $5.75

Defining Deviancy Down
DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN

Child Prodigy
SAMUEL LIPMAN

An Oxford Memoir
VED MEHTA

Discovering Columbus
LILIAN HANDLIN

Luncheon for Somerset Maugham
PAUL HORGAN

Album of Shadow Selves
STANLEY KAUFFMANN

Max Beloff
JACQUES BARZUN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE GREAT MELODY

A Thematic Biography of Edmund Burke

Conor Cruise O'Brien

Rather than a strict chronological rendering, this unorthodox biography focuses on Burke's thoughts, responses, and actions to the great events and debates surrounding Britain's tumultuous relationships with her three colonies and arch-rival France. Conor Cruise O'Brien brings his piercing intellect, passionate intensity, and breadth of experience to this rich and fascinating portrait.

Cloth $34.95 672 pages

ESTEEM ENLIVENED BY DESIRE

The Couple from Homer to Shakespeare

Jean H. Hagstrum

"Magisterial. . . . Among many brilliant pages, those on Ovid, Augustine, and Shakespeare particularly delight and are many times over worth the price of the book."—Maynard Mack, Yale University

Cloth $36.00 536 pages 27 halftones

THE DISCIPLINE OF TASTE AND FEELING

Charles Wegener

"A refreshing, engaging, and thoughtful reflection on the nature and cultivation of taste. This is a rich and eminently readable book."—Paul Guyer, University of Pennsylvania

Cloth $29.95 236 pages

Now In Paper

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

How It Runs, Where It Is Going

Jacques Barzun

With an Introduction by Herbert I. London

This present edition remains an up-to-date source of vision and guidance for everyone seeking to understand—and renew—the essential role of the university: that of teacher.

Paper $14.95 356 pages

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS 5801 S. Ellis Ave., Chicago, IL 60637

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Religion and the Life of the Intellect

In many intellectual circles the myth still circulates that religion is the preserve of the dimwitted and unlettered. Yet, recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, and amid inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This fascination is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious renaissance entail embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or superpatriotism. Nor does it imply a retreat from working for peace, justice, or human dignity. Rather, there's an awareness that, as Jean Bethke Elshtain put it, religious commitment "can help further social reform," and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political choices which are far more durable than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and technology.

The New York Times Magazine article discussed the NEW OXFORD REVIEW as part of this return to religion, and rightly so. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual engagement with what Daniel Bell terms "the sacred." We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments that yield humane social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as St. Francis, Gandhi, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Tawney, Schumacher, Mounier, Dorothy Day, Archbishop Tutu, Simone Weil, Martin Luther King Jr., and Archbishop Romero. And we probe the literary and philosophical riches offered by such greats as Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Buber, Auden, Eliot, Silone, Maritain, Waugh, Merton, C.S. Lewis, Walker Percy, Flannery O'Connor, and Graham Greene.

An ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics, we've been characterized by George Will as "splendid," by the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty as "lively," by Berkeley's John T. Noonan Jr. as "indispensable," and by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky."

Those who write for us — Robert N. Bellah, J.M. Cameron, John Lukacs, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Robert Coles, Christopher Lasch, Eileen Egan, and others — express themselves with clarity, verve, style, and heart. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy pigeonholing. If you're keen on intellectual ferment and the life of the mind and spirit, subscribe today!

(Please allow 2 to 8 weeks for delivery of first issue)

SPECIAL DISCOUNT RATES FOR FIRST-TIME SUBSCRIBERS

- ☐ One-year subscription. . . . . .$14 (regularly $19)
- ☐ One-year student, unemployed, or retired person's subscription . . . . . .$12 (regularly $16)
- ☐ Two-year subscription . . . . .$23 (regularly $35)
- ☐ One-year Canadian or foreign subscription . . . . US$17 (regularly $22) Payment must be drawn in US Dollars
- ☐ Sample copy. $3.50

NAME (Please print or type)

STREET ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP CODE

Send coupon or letter. Make check payable to NEW OXFORD REVIEW. Mail to:

NEW OXFORD REVIEW
Room 92
1069 Kains Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94706

PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the American Scholar

Published for
General Circulation
by
PHI BETA KAPPA

EDITORIAL BOARD

G. W. BOWERSOCK
PETER BROWN
S. CHANDRASEKHAR
WM. THEODORE DE BARY
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB
HILTON KRAMER
CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
MARY LEFKOWITZ
BRAD LEITHAUSER
BERNARD LEWIS
JUDITH MARTIN
ANGELICA RUDENSTINE
EDWARD SHILS
CAROL HOUCK SMITH
JACOB STEIN

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, *Editor*
JOAN M. FERRANTE, *Consulting Editor*
JEAN STIPICEVIC, *Managing Editor*
SANDRA COSTICH, *Associate Editor*
THOMAS NIEMAN, *Assistant Editor*
CARLEY STRAUGHAN, *Subscription Manager*
EDNA NWABUFO, *Subscription Manager*
LYNETTE EDWARDS, *Subscription Assistant*

Advertising Representative: CLAIRE ISELI, 2108 Kingshouse Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20905. Telephone: 301-384-2440. *U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution:* EASTERN NEWS DISTRIBUTORS, INC., 250 West 55th Street, New York, New York 10019.

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR® (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. For subscription information call 202-265-3808. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1992 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

POSTMASTER: Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders, and other mail to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Subscription rates: for individuals, $21.00 one year, $38.00 two years, $57.00 three years, $5.75 a copy; for institutions, $25.00 one year, $46.00 two years, $69.00 three years, $7.00 a copy; foreign and Canadian $3.00 a year additional for postage.

Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by return postage. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury, or for the views expressed in articles published.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE UNIVERSITY OF Alabama PRESS

Indians of the Southeastern United States in the Late 20th Century

Edited by J. Anthony Paredes

Paredes and his colleagues survey American Indian communities still surviving in the southeastern United States some 450 years after first contact with Europeans. *"Valuable material for a consideration of the nature of Indian identity in the modern world."*—Clara Sue Kidwell

256pp. 1992 $21.95, paper

G Company's War

Two Personal Accounts of the Campaigns in Europe, 1944–1945

Bruce E. Egger & Lee McMillan Otts
Edited by Paul Roley

The story of a World War II rifle company in Patton's Third Army as detailed in the journals of a Southern officer and a Northern enlisted man. *"A wonderful read, very revealing, lively, human, warm, horrifying, gripping, and more—all that we want in a good war narrative."*—Stephen E. Ambrose

312pp. 1992 $29.95, cloth

Toleration

Nick Fotion and Gerard Elfstrom

Fotion and Elfstrom argue that toleration offers us the useful possibility of responding to a difficult situation with a degree of flexibility not possible with the dichotomous concepts of good-bad or right-wrong.

216pp. 1992 $26.95, cloth

Pain in America

Mary S. Sheridan

Sheridan takes a broad look at the way Americans think about and attempt to deal with physical pain that is more than transient. *"Nearly every reader will have some measure of personal experience to draw from as he or she explores the role of our intellectual/cultural background in dealing with very difficult and very human problems."*—Roland P. Ficken

208pp. 1992 $22.95, paper

Sexual Power

Feminism and the Family in America

Carolyn Johnston

Johnston argues that the gradual growth of feminist consciousness lies in a sense of the empowerment of women as wives and mothers. She examines how feminists and anti-feminists have fought on the terrain of "family" issues.

432pp. 1992 $36.95, cloth

The Transformation of the Christian Right

Matthew C. Moen

The Transformation of the Christian Right chronicles the remarkable changes that have occurred in the Christian Right from its emergence in the late 1970s to the present, and explains the forces driving that change. *"Moen has blended history with sociology and political science to create an information-rich study. A strong sequel to his earlier book."*—Anson Shupe

224pp. 1992 $26.95, cloth

THE UNIVERSITY OF Alabama PRESS
The University of Alabama • Box 870380 • Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0380

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS

Hair Piece
Aristides 7

Defining Deviancy Down
Daniel Patrick Moynihan 17

Piano Prodigy
Samuel Lipman 31

What Shall I Read? An Oxford Memoir
Ved Mehta 55

Discovering Columbus
Lilian Handlin 81

Luncheon for Somerset Maugham
Paul Horgan 98

An Historian Who Writes History
Jacques Barzun 103

Album of Shadow Selves
Stanley Kauffmann 107

Christopher Dawson
James Hitchcock 111

Buddenbrooks and After
Joseph Gerard Brennan 119

POETRY

Blanket Weather
Dick Allen 51

Minuet
Mary Hall 53

Of Mice and Men
Wendy Barker 78

A Note of Thanks
Wyatt Prunty 96

Bean Soup: or, A Legume Miscellany
Philip Paradis 130

BOOKS

Journeys with Joseph Mitchell
William Zinsser 132

Reviews
Judith Martin, Ann M. Begley, John P. Sisk, Paul Roazen, Joel E. Cohen 138

THE READER REPLIES 158

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Announcing two major scholarly achievements . . .

The Correspondence of William James

Volume 1

William and Henry, 1861-1884

Edited by Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley
Introduction by Gerald E. Myers

Houghton Library, Harvard University

"The first volume of the letters of William and Henry James . . . is a brilliant display of epistolary moods and temperaments. . . . The three volumes will offer a splendid record of the great (and now fading) age of letter writing and of the contributions of the Jameses, over a century, to the vital growth of American culture." —**Leon Edel**

This first of a projected twelve volumes of *The Correspondence of William James* is one of three devoted exclusively to the complete surviving correspondence between William and Henry. The letters recount the struggles of each to begin his career, as well as a range of personal and familial issues. *22 illus., $45.00*

Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers

The Hogarth Press, 1917-41

J. H. Willis, Jr.

"An important contribution to Bloomsbury studies, and a joy to read. . . . As great an achievement as one of Hogarth's own major books. Leonard would have been delighted." —**Nigel Nicolson**

Courtesy of Hogarth Press

From the installation of a handpress in the drawing room through the early publication of T. S. Eliot, John Maynard Keynes, and Sigmund Freud, the Hogarth Press has had a remarkable influence on twentieth-century thought, an influence now thoroughly explored for the first time. *$29.95*

Available from the

UNIVERSITY PRESS OF VIRGINIA

Box 3608 University Station * Charlottesville, VA 22903-0608
804-924-3469/FAX 804-982-2655

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hair Piece

ARISTIDES

Plutarch, writing about Alcibiades, easily the most interesting if certainly not the most upright of fifth-century (B.C.) Athenians, tells us everything about his adventures and quite a lot about his manner. The manner, there is reason to believe, was in good part the man. He was strikingly handsome; Plutarch, usually measured in his prose, goes so far as to speak of his "physical perfection." He writes: "As for Alcibiades' physical beauty, we need say no more than that it flowered at each season of his growth in turn, and lent him an extraordinary grace and charm, alike as a boy, a youth, and a man." So naturally elegant was he that even his physical defects came to seem attractive. "Even his lisp is said to have suited his voice well and to have made his talk persuasive and full of charm," notes Plutarch. Clearly, we are talking here about a nice-lookin' fella.

We are also talking about a fairly vain fella. Plutarch fills us in on the way Alcibiades wore his robes and on his disdain for the flute, which he refused to play because he felt that the instrument distorted the features of anyone who played it. He also makes plain that, owing to Alcibiades' radiant physical appearance, Socrates felt—wrongly, as we now know—that the young man must have had natural virtue and sweetness of disposition. (No philosopher, you might say, like an old philosopher.) Plutarch tells us how many were the young Alcibiades' pursuers as well as the mature Alcibiades' admirers. But about the man's hair—its color, its texture, its length—not a word. Hirsutically, Plutarch has nothing to tell, except that, when Alcibiades went to live among the Spartans, he wore "his hair untrimmed."

But what was Alcibiades' hair like when trimmed? Did he comb it forward or brush it back or over to the side? Was it curly or straight, wavy or lank, thick or fine? Black or blonde or red or a shade of brown? Did he part it in the middle, or on one side, or not at all? Did his hairline recede as he grew older? (He died in his middle forties.) Did his hair turn gray? Did he carry a comb? Did he go in for oils, pomades, or other hairdressings, or did he leave his hair dry? Which did he prefer, Alcibiades, the wet or the dry look? If this man, noted for the excesses of his private life, was worried that playing a flute distorted his features, he couldn't have been unconcerned about the look of his hair. What a shame that we don't know how he dealt with the hair question! History, once again, leaves the significant facts blank.

Some writers are more hair-minded than others. Proust tells us little more of his M. Swann's hair than that it was red. Stendhal reports that Julien Sorel's hair is dark auburn in color, "growing down over his forehead [which] made it seem low, and gave him, in moments of anger, a rather forbidding, ill-natured air." Henry James could be—no doubt preferred to be—vague on the subject, never telling us the precise color of the Princess Casamassima's hair. Although James Joyce tells us everything else about Leopold Bloom—that he's 5 feet 9 inches and 165 pounds, among other things—I'm not sure that he tells us anything about Bloom's hair.

I happen to be reading V. S. Pritchett's memoirs at the moment, and he is, so to say, a very hairy writer. In Pritchett's memoirs as well as in his stories men appear with forelocks and cowlicks and "waving mats of long thick white hair [with] a yellow streak in it" and "carefully barbered streaks over the long egg-like head." Pritchett remarks on his and his brother's youthful hair being "carefully

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

greased by a hair oil we have invented: a mixture of olive oil and eau de Cologne, so that we smell like two young scented salads." Can it be that Pritchett, as a writer, is so attentive to other men's hair because his own, from the photographs I have seen, appears largely to have deserted him?

I would be inclined to think so, except that I am myself similarly attentive to this aspect of male plumage and always have been, without Pritchett's near baldness. My hair, like the nation at large, has been in a bit of a recession. Measured in hairline inches, I should say that, in my mid-fifties, I have thus far along been allowed to keep roughly four-fifths of my hair, with a hairline that begins to resemble the southern portion of the continent of Africa, growing a bit thinnish around Mozambique. I shouldn't give, say, an index finger to have my lost hair restored to me, though I am generally pleased to have retained what hair I have. Less is more, after all, applies chiefly in art and conversation.

I have been—how to say it?—hairdo observant all my days. When I was young I was even what I have seen described, in either *Esquire* or *Gentlemen's Quarterly,* as "hairdo intensive." In the earliest photograph of myself that I have seen, I have blondish hair combed into a large curl running the length of my head. Later my hair darkened and became not so much curly as wavy, but wavy understood in the context of stormy weather; unruly is probably the more precise word. Even today, in the somewhat impoverished condition of my scalp, if I fail to get regular haircuts, some impertinent and quite irrelevant wave appears atop my head, ready to crash against no known shore.

As a child I suffered no barber trauma. At least I can recall no tears at a barbershop. I do remember for a long spell in boyhood having to sit upon a board that raised me high enough for the barber to cut my hair, and I remember feeling that I had reached an important stage of maturity—perhaps at age seven or eight—when the board was no longer required. A boy's haircut was 50 cents when I was growing up, and then it shot up to 75 cents and then to $1. Once I began going to the barbershop on my own, my mother gave me an extra quarter and instructed me to tip the barber, unless he happened to be the owner of the shop, for it was thought undignified for the owner to accept tips. (My haircuts now cost $12, and I tip my barber $2.) The two rivaling barbershops of my boyhood were Levitan's and Ross's. I preferred Ross's, where the best barber was a tall, uncharacteristically (for a barber) reticent man named Dudley.

Dudley seems to me a fine name for a barber. So does the name Pete. I used to go to a barbershop called Pete's, where the owner, a very likeable Austrian, cut my hair. I used sometimes to go in for my haircuts early in the day, at 9:30 or 10:00 A.M., in an attempt to avoid the rush; and more than once Pete, authoritatively flapping the sheet with which he covered his customers, asked, "Through for the day, Professor?" When he did this I wanted to but never did say, "Yes, Pete, except for my work on perfecting the hydrogen bomb, which is nearing completion and is there in my briefcase." A friend who also went to Pete's told me—when Pete had sold the shop to live nearer his son, an osteopath in the Northwest—that he had never had his hair cut by a barber whose name wasn't Pete. I told him to try the Yellow Pages. But he stayed with the new owner, an Italian named John.

My current barber, a West Virginian, is named Ralph, which strikes me as also a fine name for a barber. But then it may be that if you like your barber, as I do Ralph, whatever name he happens to carry will seem splendidly appropriate—just as, I have heard it said, the perfect title for any best-selling book is the title given to any book that happens to sell very well. The one barber in my past whose name I cannot remember was an elderly man in the basement of the old-fashioned barbershop at the Marion Hotel in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was frail and gentle, had rather fluffy white hair parted in the middle, and kept a portrait of Jesus next to his towels and barbering instruments and a pair of pajamas in the cabinet below his sink in case it snowed, which, in Little Rock, it almost never did. He had a memorably light and prettily rhythmic touch with the scissors.

I cannot say the same for Felix, a barber I went to in my young manhood. Felix used regularly to nick my neck and ears, and occasionally leave me with dried blood around and under my sideburns. He rarely gave me the same haircut twice. Like the man who said in defense of his continuing to go out with a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Writing for their Lives

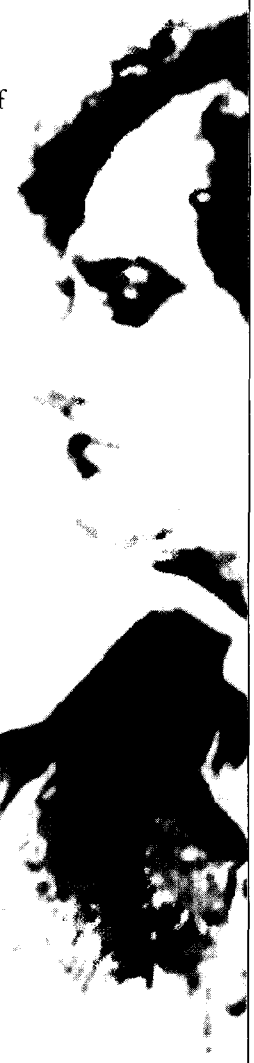
Lord Byron's Strength

Romantic Writing and Commercial Society

JEROME CHRISTENSEN

According to Jerome Christensen, literary histories of British Romanticism have dealt inadequately with Byron's "lordship"—his singularity as a phenomenal literary success and as the last and greatest aristocratic poet in the language. At first, Byron does not want a poetic career. Then, entrapped by his extraordinary success, he gets one. And once Byron has a career, he ruins it—not by his unsavory sexual practices and political grandstanding, but by publishing his greatest poem.

$34.95 hardcover



Daniel Defoe

His Life

PAULA BACKSCHEIDER

Awarded the British Council Prize by the North American Conference on British Studies

"For the first time everything we know about Defoe is presented in a single orderly sequence.... A searching study of a complex man, one that is coherent and credible for our times."
—Pat Rogers, *New York Times Book Review*

"A very considerable work of scholarship, and the first to give this prolific writer the extended treatment he after all deserves."
—John Kenyon, *Washington Post Book World*

$19.95 paperback

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS
701 West 40th Street, Suite 275, Baltimore, Maryland 21211
To order, call 1-800-537-5487.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

notably unattractive woman that it wasn't the sex it was the conversation afterward, so with Felix: it wasn't the haircuts but the laughter that went along with them that kept me coming back. An immigrant from Eastern Europe with a greenhorn's accent, Felix had my number; almost anything he said caused me to giggle. And much of what he said was what used to be called off-color—usually, let me add, way off, like chartreuse aquamarine or purplish magenta. I wouldn't say that Felix was lewd; he was the next two stages beyond lewd. No woman could pass his shop without Felix making an inappropriate comment. All his comments in this vein have left me, I am pleased to report, except for my memory of his once saying, as a woman who must have been in her nineties crept past his shop window, "Now dere, Aristides, is one built for speed."

Felix was also a super salesman, and I often used to leave his shop with conditioners, special shampoos, rubberized scalp massagers, tortoiseshell combs, and, on one notable occasion, condoms. Felix gave what I have elsewhere heard referred to, after the great power-tool company, as a Black & Decker haircut, and I finally left him when, one day, after catching the skin of my neck with his clippers, he caused me to take the name of the Lord in vain. I later discovered that, during this same haircut, he had badly, as I believe the term of art is, boxed off the hair at the back of my head, giving me a haircut that looked as if it had been acquired at the state prison at Joliet. I never returned.

I preferred smaller barbershops to larger, or what I sometimes think of as power, barbershops. Those were the shops where the atmosphere was generally a bit more Roman Empire (in decline) than I cared for. In such shops there were usually six or seven barber chairs, a manicurist (named—need I say?—Blanche), and at least one shoeshine man. I used to go to such a shop on lower Fifth Avenue in New York, and my mind retains the picture of many a businessman potentate having his hair cut while simultaneously taking a manicure and a shine, none of which distracted him from laying down the law on the forthcoming election or last week's pro football game.

I enjoyed the spectacle provided by such shops—and I'm not sure many such still exist—but I couldn't quite partake in it. I have never had a manicure and think it safe to say that I shall go to my grave without having had one; somehow, I don't think there will be manicurists in the next world. I used to take shoeshines, but I no longer do, for getting one has become not only too expensive—$2 and a $1 tip—but too fraught with social complications. In this realm as in many another we have come a long way from the time when the writer George Frazier could write a piece for *Esquire* titled "The World's Second Best Shoeshine." (This shine was available in those days at the thirteen-chair shoeshine parlor in the Cleveland airport, where they used heat lamps on your shoes and a special blend of polish that didn't rub off on a clean handkerchief. The best shoeshine, as should always be the case with the best of anything, was, according to Frazier, in dispute, rivaling claimants being at the Waldorf, the Plaza, and a shop at the foot of Wall Street.) For some years now I have shined my own shoes and rather take pleasure in doing so.

But the great watershed moment in the history of men's hairdos, for me, came one day in Manhattan in the early 1960s when I passed a crowded barbershop on Lexington Avenue and through the window saw men in barber chairs getting their hair cut while wearing hair nets. I recall thinking that new heights of male vanity—which I have always thought greater than female vanity, if only because it is generally not allowed the same free play—had been achieved. Arthur Koestler, I somewhere read, reported his anger when a rival for the affection of a beautiful woman told the woman that Koestler had slept in a hair net. A filthy lie, Koestler claimed; the truth, he allowed, was that he only bathed in a hair net. But now we had men sitting in plain public view in hair nets. A new age had arrived. Fantastico! The advent of male hairstyling was upon us.

Fancy male hairdos had existed in the past, beginning at least as early as the Persians, who cut off their hair and shaved the manes of their horses to lament the death in battle of a commander. In my own youth, there were ambitious pompadours, clean crew cuts, Chicagos (a flat crew-cut top with long greasy sides; in the city of Chicago, this hairdo was known as a Detroit), ducktails (to use the polite word), and a dramatic widow's peak with an added dippity-do effect at the front

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

worn by the movie actor Tony Curtis, famous for the line, delivered in a movie to Debra Paget in the strongest possible New York accent, "Yonder lies da castle of my fadder the Caliph." If my own unruly hair could have supported a Tony Curtis, I, at the age of fifteen or sixteen, would have worn one proudly and looked, of course, perfectly ridiculous. Saved from this particular follicular folly, you might say, only by nature.

I wore my hair, as an adolescent, *en brosse*, with no part and no pomades. The great popular hair-taming potions of the day were products called Vitalis and Wildroot Cream Oil; the latter claimed it would give any man who used it the fairly serious social problem of keeping all the girls away. I note that in French *cheveux en brosse* means "crew-cut hair," but in fact my hair, though cut short and brushed back, wouldn't support a true crew cut, at least not one that gave a spikey stand-up effect, for which straighter hair than mine was required. Crew cuts were worn by athletes—the derogatory word *jock* had not yet come into being. Boys who were more interested in the girl chase wore more ambitious hairdos.

Hollywood led in this realm as in many another. In the movies, a leading man's hair was often big-city black and lacquered. The powerful movie hairdos were those of Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Cary Grant, and Tyrone Power. Humphrey Bogart was an *en brosse* man, though closer observers than I inform me that he later wore a hairpiece, as did Bing Crosby. Gary Cooper's and James Cagney's hair seemed insignificant; so did Edward G. Robinson's and Jimmy Stewart's, though the latter took to wearing an unconvincing rug or toupee (pronounced among the cognoscenti as "toup"). Frank Sinatra was another big rug man and was said to have hired a woman, at a serious salary, to maintain his twenty-odd different hairpieces. In our own day, Burt Reynolds is of the wig party.

Clark Gable probably had the perfect movie-star hair. In a number of his movies, owing to this hair, he was given the name Blackie. Lots of people took on nicknames from their hair, the most common, of course, being the name Red, which is a tough nickname to maintain once one's hair turns white. Some kids took the name Sandy from the color of their hair. A towheaded fellow, five or six years older than I, from my high school named Whitey Pearson went on to play basketball at the University of Kentucky. The language is deficient in not having a word, the visual equivalent of onomatopoeia, for things that sound as they look. I have in mind here a frightening character who roamed the halls of my high school who had the impressively menacing name of Whitey Rasch. But the complications of race relations have put paid to the names Blackie and Whitey.

When I was in it, the military understood male vanity wonderfully well and, insofar as hair is a gymnasium for working out this vanity, made short work of it. One of the first events awaiting any military recruit is having his head shaved. The quickness of that first army haircut shocked. Three, perhaps four tracks across the scalp with a clipper—zip, zip, zip, zip—and one's individuality has suffered an immediate and powerful setback. That first military haircut was a great leveler, in a number of senses. All that careful coiffing was destroyed; all that empty vanity lay upon the floor. One felt so unsightly that one became almost automatically reconciled to the military life. With a haircut of this kind, where could one go anyway?

In the late 1950s and early 1960s longish hair was not permitted in the army. I had a few sergeants, all of them black, who had mustaches. Nobody had a beard. I'm sure they weren't allowed. Today such restrictions would probably be subject to a civil liberties suit. I don't recall any bearded teachers at the University of Chicago when I was a student there, though there were a few with mustaches walking around. One of the most interesting mustaches, a small toothbrush job, belonged to the poet Elder Olson. The first man I knew with a beard was the literary critic Stanley Edgar Hyman. His was a brown beard, and it seemed right for him. Stanley was heavyish and had a good laugh and, when I saw him, wore three-piece brown suits, which rendered him a sepia and rather Jewish Santa Claus. In those days, the early 1960s, a beard was still a badge of bohemianism, an attention-getter, a conversation piece. People who invented personae for themselves wore beards—George Bernard Shaw, Monty Woolley, Ezra Pound—and if one had a beard, it was somehow felt that one ought to have a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sufficiently interesting persona to go along with it.

Student upheaval during the late sixties and early seventies put an end to that. As California may be credited with the great cultural advance of allowing a right turn on a red light, so the late sixties and early seventies may be credited with making long hair and facial hair not only acceptable but, in some settings, practically de rigueur. Beards and mustaches are fairly popular among men, but they seem especially so among academic men. Beards were a phenomenon once common among graduate students, and, as some of these students grew older and became professors, they kept their beards. Where I teach, roughly half the professors sport beards, mustaches, or hairdos befitting the conquistadors that most of them despise.

What is the significance of this? Perhaps it is in part a way of keeping allegiance with the spirit of protest of one's youth; or perhaps it is a way of belatedly getting in on the protest one never registered while meekly studying for one's doctorate. Perhaps it is meant to show that, given one's passion for learning, shaving can only be a time-consuming distraction and is better done away with. Recall in this regard Albert Einstein's uncombed hair. Montaigne, in his essay "On educating children," writes about "how many have I known in my time made as stupid as beasts by an indiscreet hunger for knowledge! Carneades was turned so mad by it that he could not find time to tend to his hair or his nails." Perhaps life is simply made easier for them by not having to shave. (Most academic beards are not carefully trimmed.) Perhaps, again, they are there out of pure vanity, because the people who sport them think themselves damned good looking in them—or at any rate better looking than they would be without them. Perhaps some think beards and long hair make them look younger, though it is a discouraging fact that the hair on a man's face frequently turns gray before the hair on his head does.

My own sense is that the majority of men who grow beards tend only to add to their indistinctiveness. They become more Korenish—like those furry little figures in the cartoons of Edward Koren. (The combination of a woolly beard and a woolly head of hair reminds me of the child's game of men's faces that can be turned upside down and still show a face.) Some men experiment a good deal with different beards and mustaches. Facial hair is the poor man's version of cosmetic surgery, used to cover up a long lip, disguise a weak chin, camouflage bad skin. Beards taken on at midlife suggest discomfort with the way one has lived and looked in the first half of one's life. Too-frequent changes in the arrangement of a man's facial hair makes him slightly suspect. One begins to feel about men who regularly experiment with different hairdos, beards, mustaches, and sideburns that they suffer a peculiar form of identity crisis—they don't know who they *aren't*.

The most recent trend in beardery seems to be the permanent one-week's growth of facial hair. Show business once again set the precedent when an actor with the unpromising name of Don Johnson began wearing precisely such a scraggly beard on the television show "Miami Vice." Yasser Arafat has long worn such a beard—and I call them, to myself, Arafats. How one sustains a permanent one-week's growth of beard is not something I have been able to fathom. Long, unkempt hair and an Arafat can give a man what no advertising agency copywriter or designer has thus far thought to call "the homeless look," which, in a decadent society—who knows?—could become the rage.

George Balanchine, a very stylish and not notably hirsute man, once declared beards the very essence of stylelessness. His view was that the historical moment for beards had passed. They were authentic in his father's generation, but no longer. (Victorian men seem, somehow, appropriately hairy.) "All right," Balanchine said, "somebody wants to look like Christ, you know—the hair and all. But it's silly, it looks silly on people. It's all a fake." And yet is it? I have known people, contemporaries, who have had beards for thirty years. (One of them once shaved the mustache portion of his beard and revealed that over the years he had developed a thin and disapproving upper lip; the mustache was returned instanter.) They will meet their maker in their beards. I should probably no longer recognize them on the street without their beards. Which reminds me of the joke, too elaborate to tell fully here, about the Hasid whom God does not allow in heaven

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Livin' the Blues

Memoirs of a Black Journalist and Poet
Frank Marshall Davis
Edited, with an Introduction, by John Edgar Tidwell

The extraordinarily readable autobiography of this prominent Black literary figure of the '30s and '40s — "rediscovered" for today's audiences. An intimate of giants like Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, Davis also taught the first history of jazz course in the country and was a Chicago radio personality and journalist.

"Davis's messages have gifts for today." —Gwendolyn Brooks

Wisconsin Studies in American Autobiography

Cloth $27.50

Reading Between the Lines

Annabel Patterson

"This brilliant, passionately written book is an important and timely work of scholarship. . . . Even those who disagree with Patterson's arguments will respect the extraordinary ease with which Patterson crosses the boundaries between the disciplines of history and literary studies. This book will be widely read, and its readers will benefit from its erudition and candor." — Jean R. Brink, Arizona State University

Cloth $48.50 Paper $17.95

URGENT!
Of particular interest to faculty members. . .

Retirement 101

How TIAA-CREF Members Should Deal with the Dramatic Changes in Their Pensions

Willard F. Enteman

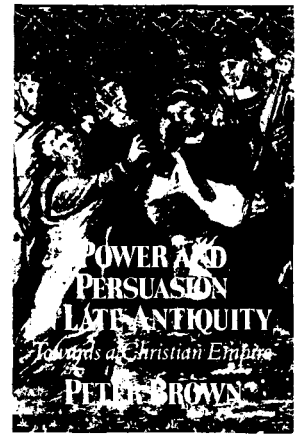
For decades, the major pension insurer for American academics, TIAA-CREF, had virtual monopolistic control of its participants' savings. The funds were locked in until retirement and the only option thereafter was to purchase an annuity from TIAA-CREF. Those restrictions were removed in 1990. *Retirement 101* is the first guide to the TIAA-CREF changes. Readers will find clear, jargon-free, nonbiased advice on all aspects of retirement planning, arranged by the stages typical of an academic career.

Cloth $35.00 Paper $14.95

Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity

Towards a Christian Empire

Peter Brown



Peter Brown, perhaps the greatest living authority on Mediterranean civilization in late antiquity, traces the growing power of Christian bishops as they wrested influence from philosophers, who had traditionally advised the rulers of Graeco-Roman society. In the new "Christian empire," the ancient bonds of citizen to citizen and of each city to its benefactors were replaced by a common Christianity and common loyalty to a distant, Christian autocrat. This transformation of the Roman empire from an ancient to a medieval society, he argues, is among the most far-reaching consequences of the rise of Christianity.

Cloth $45.00 Paper $12.95

Wisconsin
The University of Wisconsin Press
114 N. Murray St., Madison, WI 53715-1199
VISA & MC: (608) 262-8782 FAX: (608) 262-7560

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because he fails to recognize him in an Armani suit with his hair styled.

A beard, I feel, ought to be earned. Solzhenitsyn, in a Soviet labor camp, earned his beard and would seem quite unnatural without it. That he has an Amish look—a full beard with no mustache—seems even more appropriate. I have to strain to think of other earned beards. My own sense is that for a mustache to be earned, and not look fake, it probably ought to have been in place no later than 1947. Dean Acheson's Anglophiliac pencil mustache passed the test; so did Sidney Hook's small, dark, more Frenchified job. A mustache certainly ought not to have been grown after Robert Redford's mink-lipped appearance as the Sundance Kid in the movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,* which, because Redford looked so good in his, stirred many men to grow mustaches. Such a mustache, to work well, alas, requires the rest of Redford's head.

Many years ago, summering in Wisconsin, I attempted a mustache. I had a vaguely aristocratic British 'stache in mind, one not dissimilar to that which William Faulkner sported; what I achieved was something distinctly lower-middle-class Turkish. It soon hit the sink. A beard held no interest for me. I have never sported an Arafat, but years ago I used to prefer, if I had no social obligations, not to shave on weekends. No longer. Apart from occasional illness, I don't think I have failed to shave in nearly twenty years. I feel hygienically incomplete if I do not shave. A shave, like a haircut, has become something I look forward to, a positive pleasure. Now here, I do believe, is striking evidence of a quiet life.

I shave in the shower, afterwards trimming my sideburns before the bathroom mirror. I use a safety razor. I regularly try new razors and new blades, though I secretly suspect that the companies who produce them do not provide improved products but instead merely lower the quality of the ones previously on the market. At various times I have contemplated using a straight razor, but have decided against doing so, lest the probable consequence, that of cutting my own throat, over-excite my enemies.

I have been shaved by a barber with such a razor, four or five times in my life, enjoying every moment of it each time, from the hot towels upon my cheeks and jaws to the brushing on of lather to the rustling sound of the steel razor scraping against my skin. I do not tend to yearn for the good old days, but being shaved every day by a barber, as many men once were, must have been a fine and refreshing thing. At the conclusion of a good shave I feel, as Henry James remarked when, late in his fifties, he shaved off his beard, "*forty* and clean and light."

Henry James was, from fairly early in life, bald. But he qualifies, I believe, as importantly bald. Churchill was importantly bald. Edmund Wilson was, too. So were Montaigne and H. W. Fowler and Lenin, all of whom had well-trimmed goatees. Ralph Richardson was and John Gielgud is not so much importantly as interestingly bald. In their own way, so were the novelist brothers Singer, I. B. and I. J., both of whom looked better bald than when, as young men, they had hair. (In his story "It May Never Happen," V. S. Pritchett describes "a stringy and dejected man, bald but not sufficiently so.") Robert Duvall, the actor, and Matt Williams, the third baseman of the San Francisco Giants, seem to me aggressively bald—bald men that you don't want to fool with. A. J. Liebling is not easily imagined with hair, nor is Socrates. Max Beerbohm, after he became bald, added a fine fluffy white mustache to his elegant getup. Varieties of baldness are considerable, nearly up there with those of religious experience. I do not say bald is beautiful, but it can be manly and impressive.

The first historical figure whom we know to have suffered psychologically from his baldness was no less a personage than Julius Caesar. He was, according to Suetonius, a bit of a dandy, "always keeping his head carefully trimmed and shaved" and even removing his body hair. Caesar's enemies apparently mocked his baldness, treating it as a disfigurement, and Suetonius goes on to report that "of all the honors voted him by the Senate and People, none pleased him so much as the privilege of wearing a laurel wreath on all occasions—[and] he constantly took advantage of it." Caesar was also the first major figure in history to avail himself of the hairdo known as the "comb-over," or "cover-up," or "McGovern" (after the former senator and presidential candidate). In the vain—in both senses of the word—attempt to hide his baldness, Caesar used to comb the thin

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strands of hair that grew on the back of his neck forward. Napoleon, we know, was a comb-forward man; General Douglas MacArthur was a comb-over man, taking longish strands from the side of his head and pasting them across his scalp. From afternoons spent in athletic clubs, I have seen the intricate labors that go into such hairdos. The general anxieties of men who have chosen to wear them cannot, I think, be eased on windy days.

Few men take the loss of hair easily. For one thing, it is an early intimation of mortality, for as we come into the world nearly hairless, so do many of us depart it in something like the same condition. For another, baldness is viewed, in many quarters, as less than romantic. In the movies and theater, bald leading men are uncommon, though Yul Brynner, an exception, exhibited what most people would agree was virile baldness. Nowadays, too, many black athletes and white Olympic swimmers shave their heads. Yet, in television news, one never sees a bald anchorman. Without their hair and the careful coiffing expended upon it, Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, and Peter Jennings, the major network anchormen, would have to sell neckties, which would be fine with me.

Wigs and rugs, toups and pieces are among the possibilities open to men greatly uncomfortable with their baldness. Hair plugs, a surgical implant procedure of some expense, is another. One can never predict what sort of men will avail themselves of such items. I know a podiatrist who is a hair-plugs man, a pharmacist who totes an ambitious widow's peak not of nature's making, the sweet father of a friend who dyed his hair shoe-polish black. "A permanent lifetime answer to baldness!" runs one advertisement seeking the shekels of the bald and balding. "Wake up to a full head of hair!" runs another. If the exclamation marks from such ads and the many thousands that have come before them could be used as hair, baldness would be at an end, for the growth of new hair has historically been one of the great fields of quackery. If anyone ever does discover a cure for baldness, his great grandchildren and their grandchildren will be able to laugh from the penthouse balconies of apartments overlooking the world's most fashionable streets, so wealthy will he leave them. Customers will always be there.

Meanwhile, many men who lose their hair tend to go in for overcompensation. An unusually large number of men who wear ponytails, for example, seem to be balding. Pulling their hair back in a ponytail is a mistake, I believe, for it seems chiefly to emphasize their hair loss. Besides, few things are more dispiriting than a gray ponytail. It suggests aging hippiedom, than which little is sadder: a flower child is one thing, a flower grandfather something else again. I have friends and acquaintances with mustaches and beards and comb-overs, but I don't, at the moment, know anyone who wears a ponytail. I do have a friend who tells me that, at his athletic club, he has encountered men who own and wear false ponytails. What a piece of work is man!

Not long ago, listening to the excellent Vermeer Quartet, I noted on my program that it is comprised of two beards (second violin and cello), one male permanent (first violin), and one longish hair-over-the-ears arrangement (viola). The two bearded musicians are balding, the second violinist from the front, the cellist from the back. The violist, when bowing, revealed a monk's cap of baldness, and he may also be a hair-plug man, a judgment I make based on the preternatural evenness of the straight-across hairline situated midway back upon a high forehead. Long-hair music has thus taken on a new meaning in our day. It is a cartoonist's delight.

I suppose the natural tendency is for each of us to consider others by the light of his own vanity. My own vanity, since becoming an adult, has directed me to appear as little obviously vain as possible. In my particular twist on masculine vanity, I seek a quiet, subdued, nicely understated elegance—and I am fairly confident that I don't quite bring it off. Pity. At the same time that vanity is the dealer in these hirsutical decisions, temperament, too, takes a hand. I would find it extremely difficult, soon after arising from sleep on a gray Chicago morning, with a vast quantity of obligations to fulfill, to look into the bathroom mirror and see staring back at me a gray Fu Manchu mustache, a thick set of snowburns (as I have heard white-haired sideburns called), and D'Artagnan-length hair waiting to be pulled back in a ponytail. No, with such accoutrements festooned from my *punim,* I could not face the day. At the first glint of depression, I should doubtless shave

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it all off, and shave off the hair left on my head for good measure.

In these matters, one's own generation's ideal of masculinity also obviously plays an important role. One can either go with the flow or try to stop it. The first prospect renders a man ridiculous, the second hopeless. Yet another possibility is to take a seat on the sidelines, preferably in the shade, a glass of wine in one's hand, and not bark but laugh as the caravan passes. John Updike, writing in *The New Yorker*, after expressing the self-denigration that has become fairly standard with him, writes that "the impression has been growing upon me that I am surrounded by hostile haircuts," and he goes on to report that, in the wide range of male hairdos now current, "we're all butting for psychological space, and leading with our warheads." Something to it, perhaps. So many bizarre arrangements for male hair must have some meaning.

Peter the Great must have thought so in his time, for he, with his own hand, shaved off the beards of the boyars, which he thought a symbol of their backwardness. Montaigne, in his essay "On ancient customs," drew such a meaning from the dominant hairdos of his own day when he wrote: "Sidonius Appollinaris says that the ancient Gauls wore their hair long on the front of their heads and shaved close at the neck; that is precisely the hairstyle which has been brought back into fashion by the slack and womanish mode of our own century." We have here the hairdo view of history, which may be no goofier than many another put forward by postmodernist historians. (And who was it who said that the postmodernist always rings twice?)

True enough, our own century, or at any rate the last third of it, has seen some pretty wild do's. Blacks alone in this time have run through processed hair, the Afro, the drippy, the stack or muffin, cornrows, and dreadlocks, a hairstyle that is shared by black men and women and that is achieved by "dreading" one's hair. Some young blacks will tell you that a political statement is intended in many of these hairdos; others will say that it can all be chalked up to amusement. Certainly, the odious skinheads are making a statement, not to speak of a direct political identification, in shaving their heads as they do. Punk hairdos, among them high mohawks, liberty spikes, Day-Glo purple and orange dyes, are making a statement, too—one which I read to mean, "Look at me, Jack, test your own reaction, and get edgy."

But what does it mean that more working-class young men now seem to avail themselves of long hair than do young men of the middle class? Or that the two groups who seem to have the highest proportion of mustaches among them appear to be homosexuals and cops? Do you suppose that even to have a regular hairdo is to make a political statement, as Orwell—a high-pompadour and pencil-thin-mustache man—said that even to be apolitical is to be political, a formulation that, in my view, has more rhythm than truth?

Something rather unseemly there is about a man lavishing too much care upon his hair. In the end we are left with our prejudices, however implausible they might be. I prefer not to have waiters too much more fancily coiffed than I am. If I were a woman, I should prefer not to go out with a man who looks as if he has spent longer on his hair than I have. Worst of all is artificially induced naturalness. Carl Sandburg's rich mane of white hair is an instance of the artificial made to look natural. Sandburg must have felt that such hair was required of him in his persona as the "people's poet." Robert Frost, who almost specialized in put-downs of Sandburg (Sandburg was the only poet, said Frost, to gain in translation), once said of him that he was upstairs "trying to get the hair into his eyes."

"Behold my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am a smooth man," Jacob announces to his mother, stating a problem but drawing no conclusions. Perhaps he ought to have done. People have for centuries been judged by their hair. Redheads were thought to be hot-tempered. There is practically a sociology of blonde women, not much of it very complimentary, except that they are believed to have more fun. A high forehead was said to have been a sure sign of intelligence. Many of us who have had high foreheads conferred upon us by hair loss have an instinctive distrust of a man with too low a hairline. Think about these things long enough and the traditional spelling of *hare*brained begins to feel as if it ought to be changed to *hair*brained. My own last words on the subject, which I hope to repeat many a time more, are "Short on top, fairly close along the sides, and not too high over the ears."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Defining Deviancy Down

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN

IN ONE OF THE FOUNDING TEXTS OF SOCIOLOGY, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), Emile Durkheim set it down that "crime is normal." "It is," he wrote, "completely impossible for any society entirely free of it to exist." By defining what is deviant, we are enabled to know what is not, and hence to live by shared standards. This aperçu appears in the chapter entitled "Rules for the Distinction of the Normal from the Pathological." Durkheim writes:

> From this viewpoint the fundamental facts of criminology appear to us in an entirely new light. . . . [T]he criminal no longer appears as an utterly unsociable creature, a sort of parasitic element, a foreign, inassimilable body introduced into the bosom of society. He plays a normal role in social life. For its part, crime must no longer be conceived of as an evil which cannot be circumscribed closely enough. Far from there being cause for congratulation when it drops too noticeably below the normal level, this apparent progress assuredly coincides with and is linked to some social disturbance.

Durkheim suggests, for example, that "in times of scarcity" crimes of assault drop off. He does not imply that we ought to approve of crime—"[p]ain has likewise nothing desirable about it"—but we need to understand its function. He saw religion, in the sociologist Randall Collins's terms, as "fundamentally a set of ceremonial actions, assembling the group, heightening its emotions, and focusing its members on symbols of their common belongingness." In this context "a punishment ceremony creates social solidarity."

The matter was pretty much left at that until seventy years later when, in 1965, Kai T. Erikson published *Wayward Puritans*, a study of "crime rates" in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The plan behind the book, as Erikson put it, was "to test [Durkheim's] notion that the number of deviant offenders a community can afford to recognize is likely to remain stable over time." The notion proved out very well indeed.

✪ DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN is the senior United States Senator from New York. He is the author of numerous books, including the forthcoming *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity and International Politics*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Despite occasional crime waves, as when itinerant Quakers refused to take off their hats in the presence of magistrates, the amount of deviance in this corner of seventeenth-century New England fitted nicely with the supply of stocks and whipping posts. Erikson remarks:

> It is one of the arguments of the . . . study that the amount of deviation a community encounters is apt to remain fairly constant over time. To start at the beginning, it is a simple logistic fact that the number of deviancies which come to a community's attention are limited by the kinds of equipment it uses to detect and handle them, and to that extent the rate of deviation found in a community is at least in part a function of the size and complexity of its social control apparatus. A community's capacity for handling deviance, let us say, can be roughly estimated by counting its prison cells and hospital beds, its policemen and psychiatrists, its courts and clinics. Most communities, it would seem, operate with the expectation that a relatively constant number of control agents is necessary to cope with a relatively constant number of offenders. The amount of men, money, and material assigned by society to "do something" about deviant behavior does not vary appreciably over time, and the implicit logic which governs the community's efforts to man a police force or maintain suitable facilities for the mentally ill seems to be that there is a fairly stable quota of trouble which should be anticipated.
>
> In this sense, the agencies of control often seem to define their job as that of keeping deviance within bounds rather than that of obliterating it altogether. Many judges, for example, assume that severe punishments are a greater deterrent to crime than moderate ones, and so it is important to note that many of them are apt to impose harder penalties when crime seems to be on the increase and more lenient ones when it does not, almost as if the power of the bench were being used to keep the crime rate from getting out of hand.

Erikson was taking issue with what he described as "a dominant strain in sociological thinking" that took for granted that a well-structured society "is somehow designed to prevent deviant behavior from occurring." In both authors, Durkheim and Erikson, there is an undertone that suggests that, with deviancy, as with most social goods, there is the continuing problem of demand exceeding supply. Durkheim invites us to

> imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousness. If, then, this society has the power to judge and punish, it will define these acts as criminal and will treat them as such.

Recall Durkheim's comment that there need be no cause for congratulations should the amount of crime drop "too noticeably below the normal level." It would not appear that Durkheim anywhere contem-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plates the possibility of too much crime. Clearly his theory would have required him to deplore such a development, but the possibility seems never to have occurred to him.

Erikson, writing much later in the twentieth century, contemplates both possibilities. "Deviant persons can be said to supply needed services to society." There is no doubt a tendency for the supply of any needed thing to run short. But he is consistent. There can, he believes, be *too much* of a good thing. Hence "the number of deviant offenders a community *can afford* to recognize is likely to remain stable over time." [My emphasis]

Social scientists are said to be on the lookout for poor fellows getting a bum rap. But here is a theory that clearly implies that there are circumstances in which society will choose *not* to notice behavior that would be otherwise controlled, or disapproved, or even punished.

It appears to me that this is in fact what we in the United States have been doing of late. I proffer the thesis that, over the past generation, since the time Erikson wrote, the amount of deviant behavior in American society has increased beyond the levels the community can "afford to recognize" and that, accordingly, we have been re-defining deviancy so as to exempt much conduct previously stigmatized, and also quietly raising the "normal" level in categories where behavior is now abnormal by any earlier standard. This redefining has evoked fierce resistance from defenders of "old" standards, and accounts for much of the present "cultural war" such as proclaimed by many at the 1992 Republican National Convention.

Let me, then, offer three categories of redefinition in these regards: the *altruistic,* the *opportunistic,* and the *normalizing.*

The first category, the *altruistic,* may be illustrated by the deinstitutionalization movement within the mental health profession that appeared in the 1950s. The second category, the opportunistic, is seen in the interest group rewards derived from the acceptance of "alternative" family structures. The third category, the normalizing, is to be observed in the growing acceptance of unprecedented levels of violent crime.

II

It happens that I was present at the beginning of the deinstitutionalization movement. Early in 1955 Averell Harriman, then the new governor of New York, met with his new commissioner of mental hygiene, Dr. Paul Hoch, who described the development, at one of the state mental hospitals, of a tranquilizer derived from rauwolfia. The medication had been clinically tested and appeared to be an effective treatment for many severely psychotic patients, thus increasing the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

percentage of patients discharged. Dr. Hoch recommended that it be used systemwide; Harriman found the money. That same year Congress created a Joint Commission on Mental Health and Illness whose mission was to formulate "comprehensive and realistic recommendations" in this area, which was then a matter of considerable public concern. Year after year, the population of mental institutions grew. Year after year, new facilities had to be built. Never mind the complexities: population growth and such like matters. There was a general unease. Durkheim's constant continued to be exceeded. (In *Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman*, Rudy Abramson writes: "New York's mental hospitals in 1955 were overflowing warehouses, and new patients were being admitted faster than space could be found for them. When he was inaugurated, 94,000 New Yorkers were confined to state hospitals. Admissions were running at more than 2,500 a year and rising, making the Department of Mental Hygiene the fastest-growing, most-expensive, most-hopeless department of state government.")

The discovery of tranquilizers was adventitious. Physicians were seeking cures for disorders that were just beginning to be understood. Even a limited success made it possible to believe that the incidence of this particular range of disorders, which had seemingly required persons to be confined against their will or even awareness, could be greatly reduced. The Congressional Commission submitted its report in 1961; it proposed a nationwide program of deinstitutionalization.

Late in 1961, President Kennedy appointed an interagency committee to prepare legislative recommendations based upon the report. I represented Secretary of Labor Arthur J. Goldberg on this committee and drafted its final submission. This included the recommendation of the National Institute of Mental Health that 2,000 community mental health centers (one per 100,000 of population) be built by 1980. A buoyant Presidential Message to Congress followed early in 1963. "If we apply our medical knowledge and social insights fully," President Kennedy pronounced, "all but a small portion of the mentally ill can eventually achieve a wholesome and a constructive social adjustment." A "concerted national attack on mental disorders [was] now possible and practical." The President signed the Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act on October 31, 1963, his last public bill-signing ceremony. He gave me a pen.

The mental hospitals emptied out. At the time Governor Harriman met with Dr. Hoch in 1955, there were 93,314 adult residents of mental institutions maintained by New York State. As of August 1992, there were 11,363. This occurred across the nation. However, the number of community mental health centers never came near the goal of the 2,000 proposed community centers. Only some 482 received federal construc-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion funds between 1963 and 1980. The next year, 1981, the program was folded into the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse block grant and disappeared from view. Even when centers were built, the results were hardly as hoped for. David F. Musto of Yale writes that the planners had bet on improving national mental health "by improving the quality of general community life through expert knowledge, not merely by more effective treatment of the already ill." There was no such knowledge.

However, worse luck, the belief that there *was* such knowledge took hold within sectors of the profession that saw institutionalization as an unacceptable mode of social control. These activists subscribed to a re-defining mode of their own. Mental patients were said to have been "labeled," and were not to be drugged. Musto says of the battles that followed that they were "so intense and dramatic precisely because both sides shared the fantasy of an omnipotent and omniscient mental health technology which could thoroughly reform society; the prize seemed eminently worth fighting for."

But even as the federal government turned to other matters, the mental institutions continued to release inmates. Professor Fred Siegel of Cooper Union observes: "In the great wave of moral deregulation that began in the mid-1960s, the poor and the insane were freed from the fetters of middle-class mores." They might henceforth sleep in doorways as often as they chose. The problem of the homeless appeared, characteristically defined as persons who lacked "affordable housing."

The *altruistic* mode of redefinition is just that. There is no reason to believe that there was any real increase in mental illness at the time deinstitutionalization began. Yet there was such a perception, and this enabled good people to try to do good, however unavailing in the end.

III

Our second, or *opportunistic* mode of re-definition, reveals at most a nominal intent to do good. The true object is to do well, a long-established motivation among mortals. In this pattern, a growth in deviancy makes possible a transfer of resources, including prestige, to those who control the deviant population. This control would be jeopardized if any serious effort were made to reduce the deviancy in question. This leads to assorted strategies for re-defining the behavior in question as not all that deviant, really.

In the years from 1963 to 1965, the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of Labor picked up the first tremors of what Samuel H. Preston, in the 1984 Presidential Address to the Population Association of America, would call "the earthquake that shuddered through the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American family in the past twenty years." *The New York Times* recently provided a succinct accounting of Preston's point:

> Thirty years ago, 1 in every 40 white children was born to an unmarried mother; today it is 1 in 5, according to Federal data. Among blacks, 2 of 3 children are born to an unmarried mother; 30 years ago the figure was 1 in 5.

In 1991, Paul Offner and I published longitudinal data showing that, of children born in the years 1967–69, some 22.1 percent were dependent on welfare—that is to say, Aid to Families with Dependent Children—before reaching age 18. This broke down as 15.7 percent for white children, 72.3 percent for black children. Projections for children born in 1980 gave rates of 22.2 percent and 82.9 percent respectively. A year later, a *New York Times* series on welfare and poverty called this a "startling finding . . . a symptom of vast social calamity."

And yet there is little evidence that these facts are regarded as a calamity in municipal government. To the contrary, there is general acceptance of the situation as normal. Political candidates raise the subject, often to the point of dwelling on it. But while there is a good deal of demand for symbolic change, there is none of the marshaling of resources that is associated with significant social action. Nor is there any lack of evidence that there is a serious social problem here.

Richard T. Gill writes of "an accumulation of data showing that intact biological parent families offer children very large advantages compared to any other family or non-family structure one can imagine." Correspondingly, the disadvantages associated with single-parent families spill over into other areas of social policy that now attract great public concern. Leroy L. Schwartz, M.D., and Mark W. Stanton argue that the real quest regarding a government-run health system such as that of Canada or Germany is whether it would work "in a country that has social problems that countries like Canada and Germany don't share to the same extent." Health problems reflect ways of living. The way of life associated with "such social pathologies as the breakdown of the family structure" lead to medical pathologies. Schwartz and Stanton conclude: "The United States is paying dearly for its social and behavioral problems," for they have now become medical problems as well.

To cite another example, there is at present no more vexing problem of social policy in the United States than that posed by education. A generation of ever-more ambitious statutes and reforms have produced weak responses at best and a fair amount of what could more simply be called dishonesty. ("Everyone knows that Head Start works." By the year 2000, American students will "be first in the world in science and mathematics.") None of this should surprise us. The 1966 report *Equal-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ity of Educational Opportunity by James S. Coleman and his associates established that the family background of students played a much stronger role in student achievement relative to variations in the ten (and still standard) measures of school quality.

In a 1992 study entitled *America's Smallest School: The Family,* Paul Barton came up with the elegant and persuasive concept of the parent-pupil ratio as a measure of school quality. Barton, who was on the policy planning staff in the Department of Labor in 1965, noted the great increase in the proportion of children living in single-parent families since then. He further noted that the proportion "varies widely among the states" and is related to "variation in achievement" among them. The correlation between the percentage of eighth graders living in two-parent families and average mathematics proficiency is a solid .74. North Dakota, highest on the math test, is second highest on the family compositions scale—that is, it is second in the percentage of kids coming from two-parent homes. The District of Columbia, lowest on the family scale, is second lowest in the test score.

A few months before Barton's study appeared, I published an article showing that the correlation between eighth-grade math scores and distance of state capitals from the Canadian border was .522, a respectable showing. By contrast, the correlation with per pupil expenditure was a derisory .203. I offered the policy proposal that states wishing to improve their schools should move closer to Canada. This would be difficult, of course, but so would it be to change the parent-pupil ratio. Indeed, the 1990 Census found that for the District of Columbia, apart from Ward 3 west of Rock Creek Park, the percentage of children living in single-parent families in the seven remaining wards ranged from a low of 63.6 percent to a high of 75.7. This being a one-time measurement, over time the proportions become asymptotic. And this in the nation's capital. No demand for change comes from that community—or as near to no demand as makes no matter. *For there is good money to be made out of bad schools.* This is a statement that will no doubt please many a hard heart, and displease many genuinely concerned to bring about change. To the latter, a group in which I would like to include myself, I would only say that we are obliged to ask why things do not change.

For a period there was some speculation that, if family structure got bad enough, this mode of deviancy would have less punishing effects on children. In 1991 Deborah A. Dawson, of the National Institutes of Health, examined the thesis that "the psychological effects of divorce and single parenthood on children were strongly influenced by a sense of shame in being 'different' from the norm." If this were so, the effect should have fallen off in the 1980s, when being from a single-parent home became much more common. It did not. "The problems associated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with task overload among single parents are more constant in nature," Dawson wrote, adding that since the adverse effects had not diminished, they were "not based on stigmatization but rather on inherent problems in alternative family structures"—*alternative* here meaning other than two-parent families. We should take note of such candor. Writing in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* in 1989, Sara McLanahan and Karen Booth noted: "Whereas a decade ago the prevailing view was that single motherhood had no harmful effects on children, recent research is less optimistic."

The year 1990 saw more of this lesson. In a paper prepared for the Progressive Policy Institute, Elaine Ciulla Kamarck and William A. Galston wrote that "if the economic effects of family breakdown are clear, the psychological effects are just now coming into focus." They cite Karl Zinsmeister:

> There is a mountain of scientific evidence showing that when families disintegrate children often end up with intellectual, physical, and emotional scars that persist for life. . . . We talk about the drug crisis, the education crisis, and the problems of teen pregnancy and juvenile crime. But all these ills trace back predominantly to one source: broken families.

As for juvenile crime, they cite Douglas Smith and G. Roger Jarjoura: "Neighborhoods with larger percentages of youth (those aged 12 to 20) and areas with higher percentages of single-parent households also have higher rates of violent crime." They add: "The relationship is so strong that controlling for family configuration erases the relationship between race and crime and between low income and crime. This conclusion shows up time and time again in the literature; poverty is far from the sole determinant of crime." But the large point is avoided. In a 1992 essay "The Expert's Story of Marriage," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead examined "the story of marriage as it is conveyed in today's high school and college textbooks." Nothing amiss in this tale.

It goes like this:

> The life course is full of exciting options. The lifestyle options available to individuals seeking a fulfilling personal relationship include living a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual single lifestyle; living in a commune; having a group marriage; being a single parent; or living together. Marriage is yet another lifestyle choice. However, before choosing marriage, individuals should weigh its costs and benefits against other lifestyle options and should consider what they want to get out of their intimate relationships. Even within marriage, different people want different things. For example, some people marry for companionship, some marry in order to have children, some marry for emotional and financial security. Though marriage can offer a rewarding path to personal growth, it is important to remember that it cannot provide a secure or permanent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

status. Many people will make the decision between marriage and singlehood many times throughout their life.

Divorce represents part of the normal family life cycle. It should not be viewed as either deviant or tragic, as it has been in the past. Rather, it establishes a process for "uncoupling" and thereby serves as the foundation for individual renewal and "new beginnings."

History commences to be rewritten. In 1992, the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families of the U.S. House of Representatives held a hearing on "Investing in Families: A Historical Perspective." A fact sheet prepared by committee staff began:

"INVESTING IN FAMILIES: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE"

FACT SHEET

HISTORICAL SHIFTS IN FAMILY COMPOSITION CHALLENGING CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

While in modern times the percentage of children living with one parent has increased, more children lived with just one parent in Colonial America.

The fact sheet proceeded to list program on program for which federal funds were allegedly reduced in the 1980s. We then come to a summary.

Between 1970 and 1991, the value of AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] benefits decreased by 41%. In spite of proven success of Head Start, only 28% of eligible children are being served. As of 1990, more than $18 billion in child support went uncollected. At the same time, the poverty rate among single-parent families with children under 18 was 44%. Between 1980 and 1990, the rate of growth in the total Federal budget was four times greater than the rate of growth in children's programs.

In other words, benefits paid to mothers and children have gone down steadily, as indeed they have done. But no proposal is made to restore benefits to an earlier level, or even to maintain their value, as is the case with other "indexed" Social Security programs. Instead we go directly to the subject of education spending.

Nothing new. In 1969, President Nixon proposed a guaranteed income, the Family Assistance Plan. This was described as an "income strategy" as against a "services strategy." It may or may not have been a good idea, but it was a clear one, and the resistance of service providers to it was equally clear. In the end it was defeated, to the huzzahs of the advocates of "welfare rights." What is going on here is simply that a large

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

increase in what once was seen as deviancy has provided opportunity to a wide spectrum of interest groups that benefit from re-defining the problem as essentially normal and doing little to reduce it.

IV

Our *normalizing* category most directly corresponds to Erikson's proposition that "the number of deviant offenders a community can afford to recognize is likely to remain stable over time." Here we are dealing with the popular psychological notion of "denial." In 1965, having reached the conclusion that there would be a dramatic increase in single-parent families, I reached the further conclusion that this would in turn lead to a dramatic increase in crime. In an article in *America,* I wrote:

> From the wild Irish slums of the 19th century Eastern seaboard to the riot-torn suburbs of Los Angeles, there is one unmistakable lesson in American history: a community that allows a large number of young men to grow up in broken families, dominated by women, never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquiring any set of rational expectations about the future—that community asks for and gets chaos. Crime, violence, unrest, unrestrained lashing out at the whole social structure—that is not only to be expected; it is very near to inevitable.

The inevitable, as we now know, has come to pass, but here again our response is curiously passive. Crime is a more or less continuous subject of political pronouncement, and from time to time it will be at or near the top of opinion polls as a matter of public concern. But it never gets much further than that. In the words spoken from the bench, Judge Edwin Torres of the New York State Supreme Court, Twelfth Judicial District, described how "the slaughter of the innocent marches unabated: subway riders, bodega owners, cab drivers, babies; in laundromats, at cash machines, on elevators, in hallways." In personal communication, he writes: "This numbness, this near narcoleptic state can diminish the human condition to the level of combat infantrymen, who, in protracted campaigns, can eat their battlefield rations seated on the bodies of the fallen, friend and foe alike. A society that loses its sense of outrage is doomed to extinction." There is no expectation that this will change, nor any efficacious public insistence that it do so. The crime level has been *normalized.*

Consider the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. In 1929 in Chicago during Prohibition, four gangsters killed seven gangsters on February 14. The nation was shocked. The event became legend. It merits not one but two entries in the *World Book Encyclopedia.* I leave it to others to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

judge, but it would appear that the society in the 1920s was simply not willing to put up with this degree of deviancy. In the end, the Constitution was amended, and Prohibition, which lay behind so much gangster violence, ended.

In recent years, again in the context of illegal traffic in controlled substances, this form of murder has returned. But it has done so at a level that induces denial. James Q. Wilson comments that Los Angeles has the equivalent of a St. Valentine's Day Massacre every weekend. Even the most ghastly re-enactments of such human slaughter produce only moderate responses. On the morning after the close of the Democratic National Convention in New York City in July, there was such an account in the second section of the *New York Times*. It was not a big story; bottom of the page, but with a headline that got your attention. "3 Slain in Bronx Apartment, but a Baby is Saved." A subhead continued: "A mother's last act was to hide her little girl under the bed." The article described a drug execution; the now-routine blindfolds made from duct tape; a man and a woman and a teenager involved. "Each had been shot once in the head." The police had found them a day later. They also found, under a bed, a three-month-old baby, dehydrated but alive. A lieutenant remarked of the mother, "In her last dying act she protected her baby. She probably knew she was going to die, so she stuffed the baby where she knew it would be safe." But the matter was left there. The police would do their best. But the event passed quickly; forgotten by the next day, it will never make *World Book*.

Nor is it likely that any great heed will be paid to an uncanny reenactment of the Prohibition drama a few months later, also in the Bronx. The *Times* story, page B3, reported:

9 Men Posing as Police

Are Indicted in 3 Murders

Drug Dealers Were Kidnapped for Ransom

The *Daily News* story, same day, page 17, made it *four* murders, adding nice details about torture techniques. The gang members posed as federal Drug Enforcement Administration agents, real badges and all. The victims were drug dealers, whose families were uneasy about calling the police. Ransom seems generally to have been set in the $650,000 range. Some paid. Some got it in the back of the head. So it goes.

Yet, violent killings, often random, go on unabated. Peaks continue to attract some notice. But these are peaks above "average" levels that thirty years ago would have been thought epidemic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LOS ANGELES, AUG. 24. (Reuters) Twenty-two people were killed in Los Angeles over the weekend, the worst period of violence in the city since it was ravaged by riots earlier this year, the police said today.

Twenty-four others were wounded by gunfire or stabbings, including a 19-year old woman in a wheelchair who was shot in the back when she failed to respond to a motorist who asked for directions in south Los Angeles.

["The guy stuck a gun out of the window and just fired at her," said a police spokesman, Lieut. David Rock. The woman was later described as being in stable condition.

Among those who died was an off-duty officer, shot while investigating reports of a prowler in a neighbor's yard, and a Little League baseball coach who had argued with the father of a boy he was coaching.]

The police said at least nine of the deaths were gang-related, including that of a 14-year old girl killed in a fight between rival gangs.

Fifty-one people were killed in three days of rioting that started April 29 after the acquittal of four police officers in the beating of Rodney G. King.

Los Angeles usually has above-average violence during August, but the police were at a loss to explain the sudden rise. On an average weekend in August, 14 fatalities occur.

Not to be outdone, two days later the poor Bronx came up with a near record, as reported in *New York Newsday*:

Armed with 9-mm. pistols, shotguns and M-16 rifles, a group of masked men and women poured out of two vehicles in the South Bronx early yesterday and sprayed a stretch of Longwood Avenue with a fusillade of bullets, injuring 12 people.

A Kai Erikson of the future will surely need to know that the Department of Justice in 1990 found that Americans reported only about 38 percent of all crimes and 48 percent of violent crimes. This, too, can be seen as a means of *normalizing* crime. In much the same way, the vocabulary of crime reporting can be seen to move toward the normal-seeming. A teacher is shot on her way to class. The *Times* subhead reads: "Struck in the Shoulder in the Year's First Shooting Inside a School." First of the season.

It is too early, however, to know how to regard the arrival of the doctors on the scene declaring crime a "public health emergency." The June 10, 1992, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* was devoted entirely to papers on the subject of violence, principally violence associated with firearms. An editorial in the issue signed by former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop and Dr. George D. Lundberg is entitled: "Violence in America: A Public Health Emergency." Their proposition is admirably succinct.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Regarding violence in our society as purely a sociological matter, or one of law enforcement, has led to unmitigated failure. It is time to test further whether violence can be amenable to medical/public health interventions.
>
> We believe violence in America to be a public health emergency, largely unresponsive to methods thus far used in its control. The solutions are very complex, but possible.

The authors cited the relative success of epidemiologists in gaining some jurisdiction in the area of motor vehicle casualties by re-defining what had been seen as a law enforcement issue into a public health issue. Again, this process began during the Harriman administration in New York in the 1950s. In the 1960s the morbidity and mortality associated with automobile crashes was, it could be argued, a major public health problem; the public health strategy, it could also be argued, brought the problem under a measure of control. Not in "the 1970s and 1980s," as the *Journal of the American Medical Association* would have us think: the federal legislation involved was signed in 1965. Such a strategy would surely produce insights into the control of violence that elude law enforcement professionals, but whether it would change anything is another question.

For some years now I have had legislation in the Senate that would prohibit the manufacture of .25 and .32 caliber bullets. These are the two calibers most typically used with the guns known as Saturday Night Specials. "Guns don't kill people," I argue, "bullets do."

Moreover, we have a two-century supply of handguns but only a four-year supply of ammunition. A public health official would immediately see the logic of trying to control the supply of bullets rather than of guns.

Even so, now that the doctor has come, it is important that criminal violence not be defined down by epidemiologists. Doctors Koop and Lundberg note that in 1990 in the state of Texas "deaths from firearms, for the first time in many decades, surpassed deaths from motor vehicles, by 3,443 to 3,309." A good comparison. And yet keep in mind that the number of motor vehicle deaths, having leveled off since the 1960s, is now pretty well accepted as normal at somewhat less than 50,000 a year, which is somewhat less than the level of the 1960s—the "carnage," as it once was thought to be, is now accepted as normal. This is the price we pay for high-speed transportation: there is a benefit associated with it. But there is no benefit associated with homicide, and no good in getting used to it. Epidemiologists have powerful insights that can contribute to lessening the medical trauma, but they must be wary of normalizing the social pathology that leads to such trauma.

V

The hope—if there be such—of this essay has been twofold. It is, first, to suggest that the Durkheim constant, as I put it, is maintained by a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dynamic process which adjusts upwards and *downwards*. Liberals have traditionally been alert for upward redefining that does injustice to individuals. Conservatives have been correspondingly sensitive to downward redefining that weakens societal standards. Might it not help if we could all agree that there is a dynamic at work here? It is not revealed truth, nor yet a scientifically derived formula. It is simply a pattern we observe in ourselves. Nor is it rigid. There may once have been an unchanging supply of jail cells which more or less determined the number of prisoners. No longer. We are building new prisons at a prodigious rate. Similarly, the executioner is back. There is something of a competition in Congress to think up new offenses for which the death penalty is seemed the only available deterrent. Possibly also modes of execution, as in "fry the kingpins." Even so, we are getting used to a lot of behavior that is not good for us.

As noted earlier, Durkheim states that there is "nothing desirable" about pain. Surely what he meant was that there is nothing pleasurable. Pain, even so, is an indispensable warning signal. But societies under stress, much like individuals, will turn to pain killers of various kinds that end up concealing real damage. There is surely nothing desirable about *this*. If our analysis wins general acceptance, if, for example, more of us came to share Judge Torres's genuine alarm at "the trivialization of the lunatic crime rate" in his city (and mine), we might surprise ourselves how well we respond to the manifest decline of the American civic order. Might.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Piano Prodigy

SAMUEL LIPMAN

I HAVE PLAYED THE PIANO since my third birthday; even when I have not been playing the piano, I have always felt that my duty lay at the keyboard.

My almost biological relation to the piano was hardly my father's doing. Like my mother, my father, Max Lipman (né Lifschitz), was a Russian Jew, an emigrant to North America before World War I. A short, studious, and endlessly reserved man, he left his birthplace of Senna in White Russia in 1914 at the age of eighteen. His reason for leaving was simple: despite his excellent high school record, there was no college place available for him in czarist Russia. He had a difficult time getting to this country, for he had to travel by land across Asiatic Russia to Manchuria, thence to Japan, and via a Japanese freighter to Seattle. From Seattle, he worked his way down the coast, doing seasonal work in truck gardens. By 1915, my father had settled in San Francisco, and he soon began a succession of small businesses. A spell of tuberculosis in the mid-1920s sent him to a sanatorium near Los Gatos, an orchard town some fifty miles south of San Francisco; upon his recovery, he started yet another small business in Los Gatos, selling radios and home appliances, in addition to gifts and greeting cards. My father met my mother, even shorter but vastly more outgoing than he, about 1930, and in 1931 they were married; their marriage was extraordinarily close, and my mother (who died in 1984) never recovered from my father's death in 1979.

I know a great deal more about my mother's life. Born in 1902 in the Ukraine, in Krilowitz, a small town near Kamenets-Podolski, she had thirteen siblings, all of whom I believe were born before the family emigrated to Canada about 1907. The Pinskys' (the original name of the family was Pochapinsky, but this name was too long for the Canadian immigration inspector) reasons for emigration were political: my mother's older brother had become involved in revolutionary politics, and, as

✪ SAMUEL LIPMAN is the music critic for *Commentary* and the publisher of the *New Criterion*. His latest book, *Music and More: Essays, 1975–1991*, was published in the fall by Northwestern University Press. The substance of a small amount of the material contained in this memoir appeared, in different form, in a chapter by Samuel Lipman in *The Lives of the Piano*, edited by James R. Gaines, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston in 1981.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a result, my grandmother was warned by the police that in order to avoid his arrest the whole family would have to leave at once. This immense brood now settled in Winnipeg, where economic conditions were trying; my grandfather was something of a scholar and couldn't keep a job. Shortly after World War I, the whole family had come to San Francisco, where my mother began immediately to work in a drug store; she graduated from high school at night, and for her entire life she was proud of this achievement.

In Winnipeg, well before they came to the United States, my mother and her sisters had been bitten by the art bug. Poor as the family was, they somehow found the money for music lessons for some of the girls; one of my mother's sisters would shortly become a dancer, and another a writer. They found money, too, for the cheapest seats at the frequent concerts given by touring artists. My mother talked of having rapturously heard in Winnipeg the great Italian tenor Alessandro Bonci (1870–1940); more importantly, she started to take piano lessons in Winnipeg, something she was to do sporadically for another forty years. Sadly, she was never able to coordinate her movements at the piano, and furthermore she was terror stricken at the thought of playing with anyone in the room.

For my mother, music—and especially piano music—was a superior form of existence. It was not simply a question of Walter Pater's all art aspiring "towards the condition of music"; for my mother, all life aspired towards the condition of music. For my mother, concerts were holy occasions; going backstage to shake the artist's hand—if my mother had liked the concert, that is—was a chance to meet and touch a transcendent being. She treated the radio concerts, which were so frequent when I was growing up, as rituals, believing that even over the airwaves, the performers—once again only if she was taken with their playing—were speaking personally and purposefully to her. Artists she particularly adored were never referred to merely by their last names: they were "the great Rachmaninov," "the great Elman," and, especially, "the great Rubinstein." It is hardly too much to say that my mother, like some deluded character in a Thomas Mann short story, felt that the world was well lost for music.

It was into this seething cauldron of the art-seeking emotions that I was born in 1934. My mother had great difficulty in conceiving, and she prayed that she might not be barren; in her prayers she had promised that I would be a rabbi. When in later years my piano career ran into insurmountable difficulties, my mother would say that God was punishing her for reneging on her promise.

Of course, at my early age, I knew nothing of these currents swirling around me. My mother told me that I cried when I first heard the sound of the piano. Not daunted, she tried to teach me herself, but then passed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me on to a neighborhood teacher in Los Gatos, whose name—Margaret Thomas—I remember, as I do the purple dress she wore. When my mother realized that I was talented, she must have thought her dream for me on the verge of fulfillment. My first teacher no longer sufficed, and at the age of three years and ten months I was taken to a well-known San Francisco teacher, Lev Shorr; my mother had known him, before she was married, through her sisters.

At this time—the year is 1938—Shorr (a man about the same age as my father; he died in San Francisco in 1974, much honored and loved) had already taught Yehudi Menuhin's two talented sisters, Hephzibah and Yaltah; he had also taught Leon Fleisher, who was then just about to go to Europe to work with Artur Schnabel. Before the Russian revolution, Shorr had been a student of the great Anna Essipova (1851–1914) at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Essipova had been for twelve years the wife of Theodor Leschetizky (1830–1915), with Liszt perhaps the most famous piano teacher of all time. Through Leschetizky, Essipova was connected to the greatest of piano traditions: Leschetizky was the student of Carl Czerny (1791–1857), and Czerny had studied with Beethoven.

Shorr was a marvelous instinctive musician; everything he played was naturally musical and naturally affecting. He had a beautiful piano tone, doubtless owing to his pudgy but strong hands. He was hardly a virtuoso pianist; I never remember him playing an étude or other display piece. His specialty was melody, preferably encased in rich harmonies. His technique was tense, based upon raising the fingers in practice as high as possible. He told me that my fingers must look like turkeys; had he known the word, I am sure he would have used the adjective *strutting*.

Shorr took immense pains with me, giving me weekly, and sometimes twice-weekly, two-hour lessons, for which he charged almost nothing; for a time my mother tried to arrange some other students for him in Los Gatos, so that he might be able to see me more often. From the beginning, I played real pieces by real composers, not the thin and scrappy teaching literature then (and now) so popular with the teachers of the young. From my earliest age, I played Bach, Mozart, and Chopin, among the classics; because Shorr was a great lover of the then moderns, I also played Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Bartók, Bloch, and Villa-Lobos. He made some minimal changes in these admittedly easy pieces of the masters, enabling me to cover the harmonies, especially those in the left hand, ensuring that I could fill in what would otherwise have been impossible because of my limited stretch.

Shorr taught me a great deal about the way musical sounds are organized. He had very little intellectual knowledge of music and knew

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nothing about music history. But he did solidly know the rudiments of music theory. Early on—I cannot have yet been five—he taught me to read and write music; he then taught me all the major and minor scales and arpeggios, and the circle of fifths on which the succession of scales and arpeggios is based. From my first lessons with Shorr, he knew that I had an exceptional ear, including very sensitive absolute pitch; he devoted much time to sharpening further my hearing, getting me to distinguish amongst dissonant and widely separated intervals.

If the shortcomings of his technical approach are placed aside, there was only one problem with Shorr: in some essential way he was quite mad. It was not so much that he raved and ranted; most teachers who take seriously what they teach rave and rant from time to time. It was rather that his onslaught was so personal, so directed toward the center of my pride and my self-respect. As with so many music teachers, my every flaw was for him a moral flaw. Even the size of my hands, smaller—because I, like my parents, was small—than those of other children of my age, was a moral flaw. And almost as disorganizing to me as his wrath was his love: in the fashion of many Russians, when the going was good he smothered me with kisses and embraces. I could not accurately predict with which terrifying side of Shorr I would be faced next; all I knew was that some terrible outburst was always just around the corner.

My father had a cordial, if distant, relationship with Shorr. My mother's relation with Shorr was much closer, for she accompanied me to every lesson in Shorr's tobacco-smoke-ridden studio, located in a seedy building above a nightclub on Geary Street, in the tiny theater district of San Francisco. Shorr scared my mother as well as me. As she sat on a couch watching the lesson take its tumultuous course, she would often sigh, or make a rustling sound; Shorr, enraged, would turn on her as if she had plotted to destroy his concentration. Then she would cry, and I would be further undone.

Why did this situation continue? The answer must be that despite all the terrors, I was making stunning progress. By the age of seven, I was playing such difficult and complex works as the Bach A Minor English Suite and the F Minor Concerto; I was also playing the Chopin B Major Nocturne, the F Minor Waltz, and a mazurka, as well as short pieces by Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and Debussy. At first Shorr only allowed me to play for his friends, but in the winter of 1942–43, he decided that it was time for my public debut, with the program made up of the pieces I have just mentioned. San Francisco was something of a child-prodigy town, for the violinist Yehudi Menuhin, his younger colleague Isaac Stern, and the pianist Leon Fleisher had begun their careers there.

A manager—called at that time an impresario—was easily found to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arrange my concert: her name was Lulu J. Blumberg, and she came, as did most of the nonperforming participants in San Francisco musical life, from the northern California German-Jewish settlers of the later years of the gold rush; the fee for her services was fifty dollars. The small hall at the very social Century Club was engaged, I had my picture taken at the piano, programs and tickets were printed, and a newspaper advertisement was taken out. The concert expenses in general were minimal, but I don't know who put them up: my parents were probably not capable of such an expenditure, for only a few months before, my mother had to ask one of her sisters for help in making the monthly payments for the secondhand Steinway piano on which I practiced.

As the date of the concert—April 29, 1943—approached, the excitement in my life quickly rose. Some of the excitement was pleasurable: the San Francisco *Chronicle* sent its ace woman reporter to interview me; all I remember about the story was that the reporter laid great stress on the fact that I was the captain of the recess kick-ball team at the public school I attended. But I was horribly anxious about how I would play in the concert. The frequency of my lessons increased from two each week to four and five. Shorr became, if possible, more severe with me, seeing each mistake I made and each wrong note I played as provocative actions willed by me. When I played the program through in the hall on the day of the concert, the result was a disaster. I fumbled several times, momentarily losing my memory. As my parents and I left the hall, I can still see (and hear) Shorr screaming at them in his thick Russian accent, "He must rest!" It was at this time that Shorr asked me how I felt; when I answered that I was nervous, he angrily replied, "You're not nervous, you're excited."

But somehow I rested, and somehow I seem to have played well at the concert. The hall was crowded, and I think my concert earned a bit more than the expenses. Today, when all cultural interest seems to come from the pop world, it is difficult to believe that my concert caused something of a sensation in the very lively San Francisco musical world. The reviews were stunning: the nationally respected Alfred Frankenstein wrote in the *Chronicle*:

> . . . the result is a true communication of the music and genuine communication of the diminutive personality behind the performance. He goes about it in an assured, business-like fashion which is further evidence of his knowing what it is all about. Part of that assurance comes from an unfailing memory, which is one sign of exceptional musical gifts, and part of it from a technique phenomenally sure for a child of his age. Everything about the recital indicates that the boy is amazingly talented, and is in the right hands. If he gets half the breaks he ought to have, he will go very far.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Frankenstein must have been worried, and rightly so, about the problem of what he called "the breaks," for he returned to the subject in a *Chronicle* editorial, titled "Bach, Beethoven, and Babies," just a few days later:

> . . . musical success depends on curiously unpredictable factors, including the way the performer happens to please the composite Mrs. Yifnif who sits on the governing boards of small town concert courses, where the money is. It is not with the slightest intention of disparaging Samuel Lipman's extraordinary gifts that I recall the exceptional size of his audience and the smallness of the audience that often gathers for performances by mature and important artists. As things are, this child stands a very good chance of playing for equally small congregations. . . . And so in this case one abandons a principle and suggests that instead of keeping a successful prodigy away from the public after his first exposure, he be set before the public as often as possible. Make your hay while you can, Sammy boy. Mrs. Yifnif buys the tickets, and her purse strings are of the same stuff as the strings that open her maternal heart.

As it turned out, I didn't play very much. I think Shorr and my mother would have been happy for me to give concerts, but I don't think the offers ever came in. Now, at the distance of almost a half century, it seems clear to me that local musical life, as distinguished from the appearances of touring personages, was a matter of isolated individual initiatives, always (like my own debut) self-supported and almost always self-limiting. Then, too, my father, in subtle ways at which I now can only guess, disapproved of my musical concentration and only went along with it because my mother had so set her heart on it.

It must also be said that I simply did not have the physical constitution required for the hard labor of concert playing. I was seriously underweight and afflicted with severe asthma. Furthermore, in 1944 I was seriously ill with scarlet fever. Indeed, so fragile was my health that I no longer went to school but instead had a private tutor sent to me by the city board of education. But I continued to study the piano and to practice, and Shorr's (and my mother's) ambition for my future continued unabated. My new task was yet another recital, to be given in the spring of 1945, just two years to the month after my debut. I learned new pieces: this time the program included another two Scarlatti sonatas, the Bach E Minor Toccata, the Mozart B flat Major Concerto, K.450 (again with Shorr at the second piano), two Chopin preludes and a nocturne, and pieces by Villa-Lobos and again Debussy.

My second recital, save for its even greater success, was a mirror image of my debut. It took place in the same hall, with the same manager and the same interest at the box office. The reviews were perhaps even more fulsome than they had been before. This time Frankenstein began his review:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Every once in a while—maybe once or twice in a lifetime—you hear a child prodigy who makes you sit back and relax and enjoy his playing for its thorough musicality, its communication of vital ideas, its assurance and reliability and completeness. That happened to me for the first time in 1927, when I first heard Yehudi Menuhin. It happened for the second time last night, when Samuel Lipman gave a piano recital at the Century Club.

And he ended the review:

All in all it would seem that last night's large, enthusiastic audience welcomed one of the finest musical talents this town has ever produced. There was a tendency to laugh a little at some of the boy's naive mannerisms. It was a sympathetic laughter, but when you stop to think what this child has, and what lies ahead in its fulfillment and fruition, you are more inclined toward prayer.

After this second recital, I did begin to play a bit more. Shorr, who was the pianist in Pierre Monteux's San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, took me to play for the great French conductor. I played my Bach Concerto for him, and he liked it; the upshot was that I played with Monteux and the orchestra in a special Christmas concert at the Treasure Island Naval Base. Shortly thereafter, I played the piece again with the San Francisco Symphony, this time in a children's concert led by the amiable and witty conductor Rudolph Ganz. This appearance was memorable because, at the beginning of the sublime slow movement, Ganz made a motion that I thought meant for me to start but that the orchestra knew enough to ignore; I immediately stopped, my face I am sure having instantly turned a thousand colors. Happily, we all started once more, this time absolutely together.

By this time, I was back in regular school, though only attending (as I attended for my whole grammar and high school education) for half a day. I cannot say that I liked to practice; in fact, I hated the boredom and the drudgery. My mother despaired at what she called my laziness; she tried all methods to make me work, ranging from cajolery to corporal punishment. I was immensely guilt ridden by my refusal to work, but my guilt, though it produced suffering, failed to produce practicing. I loathed my lessons, which now—I was already twelve—were almost exclusively torture. Shorr was keenly aware that I wasn't practicing, and he and I, acting symbiotically, turned each lesson into a conflict of wills.

I had now passed the point at which I could avoid studying and playing the great works of the romantic literature that form the backbone of the pianist's repertory. My hands were still small, even for my age; I had difficulty in comfortably stretching an octave. Shorr went so far as to suggest growth hormone treatments, which were then just beginning to invade the fringes of respectable medicine, but luckily my pediatrician

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demurred. Perhaps because my hands were small, they were also weak. When Shorr tried to push me to play music requiring power and endurance, my hands became tense, thus producing a muscular contraction that only made my stretch smaller and my endurance less. Shorr's own technical approach was, as I have mentioned earlier, tense, and when to my tension was added his, the outcome was both physical and emotional paralysis.

At this time, almost against my will, I was beginning to love music. I don't remember having this feeling of love before my work in the winter of 1944–45 on the Mozart B flat Concerto, K.450, which I was preparing for my second recital. This marvelous work is distinguished by one of the most moving slow movements Mozart ever wrote. The melody of this movement is scarcely more glorious than the harmony; the combination deeply moved my child heart. Shorr recognized this burgeoning love in me, and formed the curious habit of taking music that he knew that I would love—in particular the Chopin concertos—and playing the juiciest parts for me; then, as he saw me consumed with the desire to play the pieces for myself, he would stop, put the music back in his cabinet, and ask me the rhetorical question, "What would you do with it?" He did assign me the Brahms D Minor Concerto, with its extraordinary slow second subject. But I lacked the most basic technical equipment necessary to play this frightfully demanding work, and I never progressed past the first ten or so minutes of the first movement. And so, for the moment at least, my love for music was stillborn; when that love did finally conquer me, a year or two later, it was not through what I played on the piano but what I heard on the phonograph. (In "Growing Up with Old Records," in the April 1984 issue of the *New Criterion*, I wrote about my discovery of the phonograph and how it provided me with music I found beautiful, most of it not written for the piano at all.)

It was, I believe, in the spring of 1946 that I played my first recital outside of northern California. Through a manager-friend of Shorr's, I was engaged by a concert series in a Los Angeles Negro high school. The concert took place on a Sunday afternoon, and it was attended by an overflow crowd. But Shorr was very unhappy with my playing, and I gathered his unhappiness was shared and deepened by the already famous Isaac Stern, who had also attended the concert. The next day, Stern called my mother in to his hotel suite and told her what was wrong with my playing, laying particular stress on the harmful effect Shorr was having on me musically and personally.

My mother was distraught. Because Stern was now so successful as a touring violinist, she had to take what he said seriously, and she didn't know enough to ascertain the truth of the matter. In fact, she did suspect that something was going very wrong in my training. She told Shorr what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stern had said about me and against him; not surprisingly, Shorr reacted with hysterical anger, calling Stern envious. Somehow my mother papered over this breach, and my lessons with Shorr went on, but at the cost of a significant increase in their already high level of tension. A new element was added to this tension: Shorr continually accused me of being the cause of his glaucoma, a disease which eventually caused his total blindness.

For some months I did not play in public but concentrated instead on learning new, "grown-up" pieces. Shorr pressed Monteux to hear me again, which he did at the beginning of 1947. Whereas my first audition with Monteux, and my experience of playing with him, had gone very well, this audition was a disaster. Shorr had told me that Monteux would ask me what I would like to play with him and the orchestra; I was to answer that I would like to play two concertos with him, as the great Artur Schnabel had just done. Monteux bridled, and from that moment on I could do—and play—no right. In front of me, Monteux castigated Shorr for making me imitate him, even in my motions at the piano; this time there was to be no engagement with Monteux for me.

The next recital that Shorr arranged for me took place in January 1948. It was to prove significant that in this concert, held not in a club hall but in a real auditorium, I exchanged for the first time my child-prodigy short pants for grown-up long pants; and, as I soon found out, I was judged, also for the first time, as an adult, despite my still-tender thirteen years. The program Shorr chose for me was difficult and curiously austere. It began with the lovely Mozart variations on *Ah vous dirai-je, Maman,* better known in this country as "Twinkle, twinkle, little star." It continued with the Bach B flat Major Partita, and the first half ended with nothing less than the Beethoven Sonata in A flat Major, opus 110. After intermission, there were two Brahms pieces from opus 116, the Chopin C sharp Minor Étude, two gay Shostakovich preludes, the equally gay but musically less solid Kabalevsky Sonatina, and two tricky Bartók Rondos on Folk Tunes.

This program hardly demanded bravura technique, which in any case I did not have; however, it did demand a kind of quiet musical penetration that, it turned out, I also did not have. The Beethoven sonata in particular was a grave miscalculation on Shorr's part. Once more, as in my unhappy audition with Monteux, Shorr must have been thinking of Schnabel; at the time, the opus 110 was perhaps the Beethoven solo work most associated with Schnabel, and through him with a Germanic intellectual tradition, not just of piano playing, but of music making. So there were at least three presumptions involved in my playing the work: playing Schnabel's piece at all, playing it at the age of thirteen, and playing it as the student of a Russian (and Russian-trained) piano

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

teacher. I don't, of course, know how I played the Beethoven; my guess, not perhaps to be overmuch trusted, is that I did pretty well with it, for in later years I played it many times in New York and elsewhere and was always quite successful with it. But as I played it this crucial first time, the Beethoven dragged down the whole recital. In the *Chronicle*, Frankenstein, once so encouraging, now grumbled about immaturity; I don't remember the review well, and my mother, God rest her soul, didn't seem to have saved it.

My time with Shorr, after more than ten years, was finally coming to an end. In the summer of 1948, my mother took me to play for Rosina Lhévinne, a famous teacher and the widow of the great pianist Josef Lhévinne in Los Angeles. Lhévinne had favorable things to say about my talent and advised an immediate change of teacher: the teacher she had in mind was herself, and she strongly suggested that my parents and I, or at least my mother and I, move to New York. My father (and I bless him for it) refused, and we drove back to San Francisco in discouragement. One day in the fall, I went for my still twice-weekly lesson with Shorr, who greeted me with the cry that I smelled bad. I was, after all, an adolescent; and in those pre-cultured days, adolescents didn't use deodorants. For the thousandth—but now the last—time I cried. At long last, not for musical reasons but because of a personal attack on me, my mother had had enough. I never took another lesson from Shorr. My parents wrote Shorr a note, and my suffering was over.

I now went to another teacher. But before I tell this much happier story, I want to describe the state of my musical education at this crucial moment in my development. As I had grown older, I was no longer an apt receptacle for Shorr's powerful natural musicality. I had begun to develop terrible tension problems in my playing; I could not play an extended finger passage without becoming so tense that my fingers and hands would cramp, thereby making it impossible to continue. I first became aware of just how disabling a problem this was when I tried, at Shorr's direction, to play the Più Allegro section of the Mozart Fantasia in C Minor, K.475; the right-hand passage with which this section opens is, as I was later to find out, of minimal difficulty, but it was utterly beyond me.

My technical limitations along with Shorr's method of working on the same pieces lesson after lesson allowed me to know only a small number of pieces; these few I had learned not on my own—I was a very poor sight reader—but by copying Shorr's example. It was remarkable that, for a student of my excellent hearing and quick learning, I had studied only two concertos (in addition to the Bach and Mozart works I had played on my first two recitals): the Haydn D Major and the Beethoven C Major, and the Beethoven was far beyond my grasp. In my last months with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shorr, I had begun work, with the greatest difficulty, on the Bartók Third Concerto. I knew no Beethoven sonatas, save for the opus 110; I had studied no extended works of Chopin or, for that matter, of any other romantic composer. In addition, I had very little experience of music in the performances of others. I remember that when, in the 1942–43 season, my mother asked Shorr whether she should take me to hear Rachmaninov, then on his last tour before his death in April of 1943, Shorr's answer was instantaneous: "He should stay home and practice." I owed what knowledge I had of music, other than on what I was working, to the Sunday afternoon radio broadcasts of the New York Philharmonic.

I was ignorant, too, of the theoretical components of music. As I mentioned earlier, I had early learned all the theory that Shorr had to teach me, but for many years I knew nothing of harmony—though I was an inveterate improviser and even tried to compose. When I was about eleven, Shorr did arrange for me to take harmony lessons from a member of the San Francisco Symphony, but I didn't seem to learn anything. Taken as a whole, then, my training under Shorr was what might be called all piano playing, no musical thinking; in this it was a mockery of the high standards of Russian musical education in St. Petersburg and Moscow before World War I.

Miraculously, my mother found me another teacher. From Lutie Goldstein, an elderly German-Jewish music patron who had been responsible for the support of Isaac Stern and the launching of his career, my mother heard of a new arrival to the Bay Area who had been warmly recommended by Menahem Pressler, a young Israeli pianist who later became a much-respected member of the Beaux Arts Trio. This new arrival was Alexander Libermann, who had been born in Russia, where he studied with Felix Blumenfeld (1863–1931), a teacher of Vladimir Horowitz; shortly after the Bolshevik revolution, he had escaped to Berlin, where he studied with the great Dutch pianist Egon Petri and became his assistant; in the mid-1930s, Libermann once again escaped, this time going from Germany to France, where he hid throughout the war. My mother knew nothing about him, other than his connection to Pressler and the fact that he, like Pressler, had come to Northern California because Petri was an artist-in-residence at Mills College in Oakland.

My mother made an appointment for Libermann (a man, like Shorr, about the same age as my father; he died in 1978) to come to our house to hear me play. When the hour arrived, I stationed myself at our living-room window and saw an appealingly thin, beaky, and very foreign-looking man get off the bus and cross the street in our direction. When he came in, I was immediately taken with the twinkle in his eye,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the intelligence with which he spoke in his terribly broken English. I played for him all that I knew at the moment, which, I am afraid, included the Mozart Fantasy that I could not get through. He said that my tension could be cured, and he radiated confidence about me, quite winning my heart by saying that I must immediately cease practicing, for practice would only solidify my bad habits. But before he would agree to teach me, he insisted that I come to play for his master Petri, to get another opinion about my situation.

The next week my mother and I took the long bus ride to Oakland where we found Petri's comfortable house, with two shining Steinway grands, in the hills overlooking San Francisco Bay. Petri too had a twinkle in his eye, though it was perhaps a shade less kind than Libermann's twinkle. As I played for Petri, Libermann sat by his side; the two of them, both polyglot, kept exchanging jokes in what I later found out was Polish. I played for Petri much as I had played earlier for Libermann, and the great man contented himself with speaking highly of Libermann. That was enough for my mother; it was also enough for me.

With Libermann, I began playing the piano in an entirely new way. Whereas Shorr's approach had been based on finger action, accomplished by a constant and essentially unvarying application of muscular effort, Libermann emphasized free movements of everything from the fingers up through the hand, the wrist, and the arm. He advocated grabbing the keys in order to get them down, to be followed immediately by as total relaxation as could be managed.

I also began to play a kind of music entirely new to me. In addition to Bach (the C Minor Fantasy), I immediately started on four large-scale works: the Liszt Variations on a theme of Bach, taken from the Cantata *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen,* and the B Minor Mass; the Beethoven Sonata in D Minor, opus 31, no. 2; the Chopin G Minor Ballade; and the Ravel Sonatine. Compared to what I had been playing, this was all virtuoso music. A further shock was in store for me when I realized that Libermann would not play the music for me so that I could imitate him; therefore I would actually have to read the notes, and, because Libermann had a good ear, I would have to read them carefully.

I loved the Libermann repertory, and I quickly picked up his technical method. Within a few weeks, my endurance had increased, and—*mirabile dictu*—I was actually playing octaves and big chords. Libermann consented for me to go back to the Beethoven C Major Concerto; under his instruction I was able to master the work's many technical passages. In less than a year, I had a new concert program ready, and Libermann was eager that I try it out in public. Just to be sure, he took me to play it for Petri, who proudly found several incorrectly read (and uncorrected) notes, pronounced me improved and perhaps

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

showed some annoyance that, after a suitable period of preparation by Libermann, I had not come to study with him.

An opportunity, in the form of still another solo recital, soon presented itself. The concert was to accomplish two goals: it was to present me in San Francisco musical life as Libermann's student rather than Shorr's, and it was to provide an opportunity for me to be heard by a person or persons who might consent to pay for my musical education. Once again Lulu Blumberg was pressed into service, and she arranged for the concert to take place on a Saturday afternoon in April of 1950 at the mansion (modeled, I was told, on the *Petit Trianon*) of Mrs. Marcus S. Koshland. Cora Koshland, a woman then in her mid-eighties and very ill, was one of the great music patrons of San Francisco, and like her peers, was a member of the German-Jewish patriciate. The concert, which included all of my new, "grown-up" pieces except the Liszt Variations, took place in her indoor marble courtyard, complete with a central fountain; she listened to me play from her bedroom, where she was to die several weeks later. The concert audience still bore some signs of my previous success, for among its members were Isaac Stern, his former teacher Naum Blinder, the concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony and a well-known chamber-music player, and Pierre Monteux and his wife.

The concert went well, and the critics found increased maturity in my playing as well as vastly increased technical command; however, they also found my playing marked by a new sobriety, taking the place of my former imaginative musicality. I suspect they were right, for my playing had traded Shorr's virtues and vices for those of Libermann, and it is only a slight exaggeration to say that in less than two years I had gone from the colorful world of Russian music to the sombre world of German music.

Shortly after the concert was over, Libermann came up to me, red in the face and with his still-weak command of English almost totally gone. "A strange thing happened," he said. "A little old woman in long furs comes to me and says, 'Are you his teacher?' I say yes, and she says, 'My name is Heller. I want you to tell what the boy needs, and I give it to him. Call me Monday morning.' And then booms! She runs away."

Just like that, I now had a sponsor, whose arrival in my life was to bring me much help, much knowledge, and some rue. Clara Hellman Heller (Mrs. E. S. Heller), then nearly seventy, was a daughter of I. W. Hellman, a German Jew who had made a great fortune in California banking before the turn of the century. In the 1920s, Florence and Sidney Ehrman, Clara's sister and brother-in-law, had been the bountiful sponsors of the three Menuhin children, very much including the remarkable Yehudi. Clara Heller herself was a major contributor to the San Francisco Symphony and a regular concert and opera goer. She was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a very bright woman, of true warmth of heart but also of marked choleric temperament. She had been widowed for many years and lived alone in a grand house, attended by a large and devoted staff. Her only child, Edward, was a power in San Francisco financial circles; her daughter-in-law, Elinor Raas Heller, was a regent of the University of California and, with her husband, a large financial supporter of the Democratic Party and associated liberal causes.

All this I was to learn in small increments as the years passed. When Libermann called Clara Heller, she immediately offered to pay for my lessons. For some months all my contact with her was through Libermann. She wanted to meet my mother, and so in the summer she, Libermann, my mother, and I had lunch at the Palace Hotel. That lunch passed rather amiably, and she decided to send my father a generous monthly check, out of which my expenses (unspecified, but to include lessons) were to be paid. She began to call me, always before 8:00 A.M., and always expecting me to sound bright and chipper, no matter how asleep I might have been just seconds before.

She also began to invite me frequently to come to have a drink with her. This was my introduction to the world of a settled comfort and grandeur I could not have imagined, and one that I think few people alive today can have experienced: the velvet walls covered with gloomy portraits and landscapes, the huge oriental rugs, the dark red carpeting on the stairs, the omnipresence of the uniformed servants, the cozy comfort of the sitting room upstairs (with its panoramic view of the San Francisco Bay and Marin County), and above all the absolute silence with which this establishment went about its duties. When, many years later, I went on a tour of the Palacio Real in Madrid, I realized that what I had witnessed at Clara Heller's in the 1950s was only a smaller version of the way European royalty lived before Sarajevo.

As the months passed, the invitations for drinks became invitations to dinner, and soon invitations for Saturday or Sunday at the Heller estate in Atherton, just outside Palo Alto, some twenty miles south of San Francisco. I was introduced to a great number of Heller connections, for San Francisco German-Jewish life was in this way, as in so many others, a perfect replica of the life of "Our Crowd" in New York; except for her son and daughter-in-law, they all treated me as bright and gifted. I cannot say that my head was not turned by all this luxury and praise; my head was turned, too, by the evident desire of Mrs. Heller to make me, in her own words, "one of us."

The only problem with this state of affairs—and it would not have taken a Freud to predict it—was that Mrs. Heller and my mother did not get on. Mrs. Heller thought that she was lifting me from my rather modest (if not actually mean) origins into a better and higher world; my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mother, much as she wanted a musical career for me, did not want to lose her only child to a rival, no matter how wealthy. In the early years of my relation with Clara Heller, she and my mother would talk occasionally on the phone, with voices raised on both sides. The conversations would leave my mother in tears. Although these occasions became increasingly rare, I found myself running to answer the phone in those early morning hours when the caller was likely to be Mrs. Heller.

This very personal drama took place at the edge of my piano playing. In June of 1950, I graduated from high school after just having turned sixteen; I was thought too young to go to college, which in any case seemed hardly the place for an aspiring performer. So all thoughts were riveted on the progress of my playing. What this meant to Libermann and my mother was twofold: I must learn as many pieces as possible, and ways must be found for me to appear before the public in important concerts. Mrs. Heller had yet another goal in mind, one intermediate between my learning repertory and playing concerts: I must place myself under the wings of famous musicians.

Libermann now introduced me to several of the greatest pieces of the repertory. Chief among these were two sonatas: the Beethoven opus 111 and the Liszt. I learned these masterworks quickly, the first profound and the second virtuoso, and Libermann (I think wisely) concentrated not so much on my perfecting every note, but on my getting the broad outline of the music right. I played both works in student recitals at Mills College, where Libermann, on the faculty, was able to arrange my participation even though I was not an enrolled student. Once again, I could not believe the changes in my repertory and my playing in just a little more than two years of Libermann's teaching.

Because of Mrs. Heller's role in the San Francisco Symphony, she was close to the Monteuxs; because of her wider role as a music patron, she was also close to Darius Milhaud, the important French modernist composer then teaching in alternate years at Mills. In the fall of 1950, she arranged for me to play yet again for Monteux and for me to take private lessons with Milhaud.

The audition with Monteux took place on the stage of the War Memorial Opera House, the very beautiful hall in which the San Francisco Symphony concerts took place. Mrs. Heller left nothing to chance: she herself, accompanied by Margaret Sloss (Cora Koshland's daughter and in her own right an important patron) turned up at the audition; the two ladies, the elder radiating authority and the younger charm, sat on the stage with Monteux as he listened to me. This audition, unlike my last one under Shorr's auspices, went well, and Monteux asked me to play with him on the opening subscription concerts of the next season. Furthermore, he ordered the concerto he wanted, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beethoven C Minor. And there was one more requirement: I was to attend his summer school for conductors in Maine in the coming August, where he would work with me on the Beethoven.

Libermann was already unhappy at the prospect of the incursion of Milhaud, whose music he (and Petri) did not like, into my life. Now he had the further worry that Monteux would displace him and, in effect, become my teacher. I should also add that Monteux and Milhaud, both French Jews who had left France to live year-round in the United States during the war, had no love for each other, a state that I suspect their respective wives had encouraged even if not actually engendered.

My work with Milhaud, which began in the winter and spring of 1950–51 and continued in the fall, winter, and spring of 1952–53, consisted of weekly lessons in the living room of his house on the Mills campus. I don't know why he took me as a student, save as a favor to Mrs. Heller, who in 1947 had commissioned his *Sacred Service* for performance at Temple Emanu-el in San Francisco. I never studied composition with him, for after a brief fling as a child at writing music (knocked down by Shorr), I never considered myself talented.

Instead Milhaud was kind enough to teach me species counterpoint of the strictest sixteenth-century ecclesiastical variety. In this, a discipline hedged about by complex and rigid rules, he was a great master. As I wrote my exercises, always based on a bass line Milhaud wrote for me, I struggled with difficulties that turned out, when I took the completed results to him, to be child's play for Milhaud. He took the greatest pleasure in solving the problems he had set for me, and as our work advanced into the higher reaches of the more exotic varieties of four-part (and more) counterpoint, he displayed a truly frightening virtuosity. He loved Bach, and as a particular favor he would play four-part Bach chorales with me—four hands at the piano. At this time, he suffered from crippling and debilitating arthritis, but nonetheless his piano touch was like velvet.

I knew that I should be interested in Milhaud's music, despite the constant sniping from Libermann. (An example of Libermann's attitude to Milhaud was his telling the following anecdote. At a Budapest Quartet concert at Mills, the program had been Mozart, followed by Walter Piston, and then Milhaud. So at the intermission, Petri ran around the foyer brandishing the program, telling everyone, "You see, it's proven. Mozart Pist-on Milhaud.") So I bought his Second Piano Sonata (1949) and proceeded to study it. But I was already in my acute Wagnerolatry phase, having just seen Kirsten Flagstad at the San Francisco Opera in both *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal*. Compared to the voluptuousness of Wagner, Milhaud's piano music seemed pretty thin, and I made no headway at all in the piece; compared to the German romantic aesthetic,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

French high modernism lacked the power to convince me, and I am afraid that I made my judgment clear to Milhaud. It took more than a decade for me to be able to play enthusiastically some of Milhaud's music—the first book of the early and charming *Saudades do Brasil* (1920–21)—for him, but by then I was no longer his student, and our relation was one of distant cordiality.

In retrospect I feel I made a botch of my work with Milhaud. I did learn a great deal of counterpoint, even gaining something of a facility in this arcane craft so useful to a musician. But what I did not get from Milhaud was some understanding of his position in French music and intellectual life, his relation to his fellow composers of *Les Six*, to Jean Cocteau, and to Paul Claudel, whose diplomatic attaché he was in Brazil (where Claudel was the French minister) in 1917–18 when he heard the folk tunes that later went into the *Saudades*. I never knew what Milhaud, perfect gentleman that he always was, thought of me. I hold his personal memory dear; often I still find his music, written at incredible speed and in incredible profusion, difficult to penetrate; but I am not willing to state that the fault is anything but mine.

My relation with Monteux was much closer and, withal, much less gentle. When I went to Maine for the first time at the end of July 1951, I had never been away from home, not even overnight. I flew to New York, making one stop in Chicago, where the airline crew was afraid that the landing gear had not gone down properly. We were therefore late getting into La Guardia, and I had to run to catch my plane to Bar Harbor. As I boarded the plane, I saw Monteux and sat next to him. I found myself with absolutely nothing to say to him, and I felt embarrassed. The flight was choppy, as flying over the seacoast often is in the summer, and it emphasized my discomfort with the situation. Monteux, who had just been conducting outdoor concerts at Lewisohn Stadium in New York, was ebullient; and it was all I could do not to throw up.

At the Bar Harbor airport, we were met by Mrs. Monteux, driving the enormous wood-paneled station wagon that served as her trademark in Maine—just as her mink coat did in San Francisco. She couldn't have been nicer to me, but every word she said on the way to nearby Hancock, where the Monteux school was located, concerned the wonders of music making I would find at the school, which had already started several days earlier. With every additional word about the wonders there, I felt more outclassed.

Mrs. Monteux (I shall continue to refer to her in this formal way, for I always found it difficult to call her by the name she wanted—"Mum") dropped me at the plain but cozy house of the Youngs, the lovely people with whom I was to stay. Russell Young was Mrs. Monteux's cousin, a bright man, wiry and taciturn in the Maine fashion, and a small farmer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who also kept chickens. His wife Sylvia was motherly and always kind. They had two daughters about my age, the elder of whom I soon began to keep company with; this gave Mrs. Monteux evident satisfaction, for she loved nothing better than bringing boys and girls together.

So far, so good, but the Youngs were also paid hosts to several of the music students, one of whom turned out to be my roommate. For me, he was an awe-inspiring creature, about my age, the brash, confident son of a Jewish cardiologist, and on his way to becoming a doctor. He was at L'école Monteux not as a conductor but as the first cellist of the orchestra—generally made up of the conducting students themselves, but sometimes supplemented by "ringers." As he told me himself before I had a chance to hear him play, he was a brilliant performer and already a big hit with Monteux.

But it wasn't this young man's musical prowess that bothered me; it was what in an older way would have been called his social sophistication. What this meant in practice was that he knew about girls and, as he also told me, all about girls. By contrast, I had never been out on a date; when I saw a girl I liked (an uncomfortably frequent occurrence), I would blush and retreat. After an excellent dinner, family style, at the French restaurant run by Mrs. Monteux's son and daughter-in-law, the cellist and I retired to our room. He told me about his conquests and mocked me for having none of my own to report. Finally he drifted off to sleep, but I did not; in fact, I didn't sleep at all that first night.

Next morning, I was summoned to the conducting class, which took place on the stage of a small, rustic wooden hall, fittingly called the Forest Studio. Here I found a small orchestra, led by a succession of student conductors, with Monteux sitting at the rear in a director's chair. They were working on the Weber *Oberon* Overture, and several of the vital winds were missing. So Monteux asked me to play on the piano, from a miniature score, the missing wind parts. Disaster immediately befell me, for the very opening of the piece has the famous fast wind chords, played, among other instruments, by the clarinet—but I could not transpose the A clarinet part into C. So I made a mess of the whole thing, and I was shortly removed, with the accusation—not unfounded—that I wasn't a real musician.

During a break, Monteux asked me to play a solo piece in the school orchestra concert on the upcoming Sunday; it was already Friday, and I hadn't practiced in several days. But I gambled, and offered him the Chopin G Minor Ballade; he said fine, and I was released to go off and practice. I now had the worst of both worlds: I had failed my initial test in front of my peers, when I couldn't sight-read those miserable little wind chords; at the same time, I was being singled out to play a big solo

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

piece in front of a real, paying audience. My peers hated my guts, it seemed; I only wished that I had a few more guts for them to hate.

I played the Ballade in the concert, and save for a bit of unsteadiness in the very difficult coda, I thought it went satisfactorily. I was surprised that so few people spoke to me after the concert, but I managed to put this out of my mind. At class the next morning, the reason for the silence became clear. I went up to Monteux and foolishly asked him, "How did you like my Ballade?" His answer was stinging: "Not at all." He walked away, leaving me to stew in my own properly chastised effrontery.

Soon—it may have been that afternoon—I was told that in two weeks I would be playing my Beethoven concerto with the orchestra at a Sunday concert, conducted, of course, not by Monteux, but by the school's director. I was also told that I would imminently be required to play the Beethoven concerto for Monteux. I had been working on the piece with Libermann for several months, and I seem to remember, though I may be wrong, that I had played it in a Mills College summer session student recital just before coming to Maine. But however I thought I knew how to play the piece, I certainly didn't know how to à la Monteux. My rhythm wasn't steady, my scales weren't even, I didn't observe the phrasing, my ornaments and trills didn't have enough notes in them, and I didn't observe the dynamic marks Beethoven had so carefully put in. Unlike Libermann, who was interested in the broad sweep of the music and in the broad effect the music made, Monteux cared about every note: years later, I was to tell a radio interviewer that in playing for Monteux, one wasn't playing for a conductor, but rather for the all-knowing composer.

I left Monteux's sprawling and luxurious home that day badly worried that my engagement in San Francisco would be canceled. As my almost daily lessons with Monteux went on, my worries abated, for Monteux seemed to find at least some improvement in my musical sins. He worked every bar of the piece with me for what seemed like hours, until the piece didn't seem music, but a hurdle race. Of Beethoven I think I learned little, for the one approach to Beethoven that is always wrong is what for the moment became mine: paralysis.

But notwithstanding my fears, the concert with the orchestra went quite well, and Monteux must have been pleased. He asked me to stay after the end of the school in September for more work on the Beethoven and also to play half of a solo program on the final Sunday (non-orchestral) concert of the season. Every day of a beautiful late summer week in Maine, I played many pieces for Monteux. By then I was not quite so afraid of him, though I still found his antique Chickering grand piano unresponsive and clumsy to manage. He even complimented me for one piece I played for him—the Liszt Variations on *Weinen, Klagen,*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sorgen, Zagen—and I felt like a king. The concert was much applauded, and Monteux, seconded by his wife, beamed at me, and Mrs. Monteux talked ecstatically about how wonderful my concerts in San Francisco with "Mait'" (her Maine pronunciation of *Maitre)* would go. I had a tearful parting from the Young's daughter, to whom I had grown very close; we said good-bye at the Ellsworth railroad station, rather than at the Bar Harbor airport, because a plane had crashed the week before in San Francisco Bay, scaring my parents and me for years about planes. I then took the Bar Harbor Express, that monument to Maine summer living in the late nineteenth century, to New York, where I wanted to stop for two days—to buy imported 78 RPM phonograph records—on my way back to the coast.

In five weeks I had grown up, meeting a girl and learning to play for a great musician who was not my piano teacher. These two accomplishments were both important, but I only took pride in the first; despite my having established a *modus vivendi* with Monteux, my fears and doubts about a musical life remained.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Blanket Weather

DICK ALLEN

Down from the attic they come, the old thick blankets
In our family for years: two Thomas Earlys,
A Hudson's Bay Point, a Chief Joseph,
And the barracks-green army ones our fathers slept beneath
At Hanover Field and Bastogne. We put up the storms,
Caulk, and rake curlers of maple leaves against the house,
Comfortable in our sweaters. At lakeshore
Our neighbors pull their rowboats from the water,
Turn them over, covering them in tarps
Held down with large stones. A Connecticut chimney sweeper
Waves his top hat from a nearby roof,
And although it's too early for snow, each evening
The sky has seemed heavier, whiter,
Wind shifting to the north. Streetlights go on
Just after supper, gathering knots of boys and girls,
Skateboards and bikes. There's something Eakins about it:
The colors, the calm, the pleasurable sense in waiting
For so much out of our hands. We begin
Imagining frost birds coming to our windows,
Radiator steam, slippers beneath the bed
As we unfold the blankets, shake them out between us,
One with the almost-not-there mothball smell
That reminds you of oaken chests, stored wedding gowns,
Their lace browning slowly as the backs of elderly hands,
And the Armed Services Editions
of *The Razor's Edge, The Citadel, The Daniel Jazz*
That lay deep in rafters beside the huge glass eyes and snout
Of a gas mask your father carried as he walked beside the tanks,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Toward the war's end. Is it too sentimental
To say we now are living what they once fought for
Approaching fifty years ago? I've ordered a cord
Of fireplace wood to be delivered to the shed,
Changed the antifreeze, and switched to a heavier jacket
On my nightly strolls through the suburbs
To the end of Robinwood Lane, where I bend
Onto Booth Hill until it reaches Fern Circle
And the peaceful houses set back from their dormant lawns.
I shiver, blow on my fingers, looking forward
To crawling beneath the blankets and the slight
Scratch of wool as I turn to your warming body
Under the striped patterns, the indigo lines,
A small boat drifting from a jeering crew,
The Nez Percé of Wallowa Valley, laying down their weapons
Forty miles from Canada—and December,
1944: the battle for our lives.

✪ DICK ALLEN's poems have appeared in *The Best American Poetry, 1991*, the *Hudson Review*, *Poetry*, and many other publications. His collections of poetry include *Flight and Pursuit* and *Overnight in the Guest House of the Mystic.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Minuet

MARY HALL

Standing outside the maestro's house
I am a mature and confident woman.
My son and I enter hand in hand.
His lesson is first;
I listen attentively.

Four years old,
he thinks he is Itzhak Perlman.
I envy him the confidence
with which he plays the minuet
on his tiny violin.

Now it is my turn.
Ghosts crowd into the small studio;
my father the violinist,
musicians, critics, perfectionists line the walls.
I am ten years old.

The maestro senses this.
A man my own age,
he calls me "my dear"
and gets away with it.
He tunes my violin.

My chin rest carries his cologne
and holds it a few inches below my nose.
For the moment I am a woman again,
privately enjoying this scent
without loss of composure.

As I begin to play
I revert to childhood.
With trembling bow and frozen fingers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I struggle through the Minuet in G
hating Beethoven for having written this.

Without warning
the maestro lays his hand on my shoulder.
I am a sucker for affection.
Suddenly in love now,
I rest momentarily in adolescence.

Gathering up my books and my years
I pretend that I was neither
ten years old nor in love today.
I close my case
and the phantoms disappear.

I will come back next Monday
to face this music again.
As my son and I leave hand in hand,
in the sunlight
I am a mature and confident woman.

✪ MARY HALL is a research scientist at the David Taylor Model Basin in Carderock, Maryland.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What Shall I Read?

An Oxford Memoir

VED MEHTA

I ARRIVED AT OXFORD in the autumn of 1956. At the station, I tried to press on the porter two half crowns. After all, he had carried my suitcase and escorted me from the train through the ticket barrier and out onto the street. He would not accept the money.

The coins felt heavy in my hand. A porter was turning down a tip from me because I was blind. I was touched but irritated by his misplaced kindness. "Go on, have a drink on me," I said, trying to put the monetary exchange into a sociable context. I wanted the business to be over with quickly. I was sure that people were watching.

"Ta, ta," he said, pushing away my outstretched hand. He added, in a kindly tone, "No porter will accept money from a person who can't see."

In America, the dollar is almighty, I thought, but here the custom is different.

"I am Geoffrey Slater," a youthful-sounding man said, coming up to me. "I'm a lawyer. Mr. Tylor asked me to meet you at the station."

Slater's introducing himself as a lawyer confused me, and I asked him if he was a lawyer for the college.

"No, I'm in my third year of reading jurisprudence," he said. It dawned on me that at Oxford by the mere act of reading a subject one became, in a sense, a man of the profession.

When I applied to Balliol, I had been so bent upon getting admission that I hadn't stopped to think whether reading law made sense for me. After all, Tylor had taken it for granted that that was what I would do, and successful blind people everywhere were lawyers. Quite early, Tylor had impressed upon me that, since Roman law formed the basis of English law, he expected me to have an adequate knowledge of Latin

✪ VED MEHTA is the author of a continuing autobiographical series, *Continents of Exile*, which includes *The Stolen Light*, *Daddyji*, *Mamaji*, and *Vedi*. He has been a MacArthur Fellow and a Visiting Fellow at Balliol College, Oxford, and he currently holds the Rosenkranz Chair in Writing at Yale University. This essay is a section from his forthcoming book *Up at Oxford*. Copyright © 1992 by Ved Mehta.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before coming to Oxford. As a result, I had spent much of my senior year studying Latin. Around the time of graduation, however, I began to have second thoughts about reading law. I learned that at Balliol, for law, I would essentially have only Tylor as my tutor. During the Pomona years, I had scarcely met a blind person, and the thought of being beholden to a blind tutor for my further education seemed like a backward step—like returning to a school for the blind.

I began to fret about what kind of teacher Tylor might be. From Slater, I learned that he had published little or nothing; in contrast, my best teachers at Pomona were those who had published a lot—had proved their ideas in the intellectual marketplace, beyond the college gate. On top of these misgivings, while I was finishing my young autobiography I had come up against the question of where I should settle—in India or in America—and discovered that I had more conflicts about that than I had previously imagined. (At the time, the idea of settling in the country of the erstwhile rulers was unpalatable.) I therefore felt that I should postpone the decision about law until I had resolved the question of where I would settle. If I was to be a lawyer in America, I would eventually have to go to an American law school; if I was to be a lawyer in India, I could always read for the bar in London. Finishing the autobiography also opened up the possibility of my straying from the beaten path of law and striking out for a different career. In that event, the best use I could make of Oxford would be to get more general education. As soon as we met in Europe, I had aired my reservations about reading law to my father. He had immediately said, "Forget about law. Now that you have written a book and are going to Oxford, there are indeed other careers open to you." But I was going to Oxford in a little over a month, and we both thought it best to leave well enough alone until I could talk things over with Tylor in person.

I now asked Slater what, exactly, Tylor was like.

"He is—well, clever," Slater said slowly, as if to bring out every nuance of the word. The words seemed to conjure up a man with an agile, almost athletic brain.

In America, my question would have been the occasion for a flood of impressions of Tylor's quirks and habits, I thought, but maybe in England they aren't interested in personal details. Still, I thought I should try to find out as much as I could about him before I risked telling him of my change of heart about law.

"What is Tylor really like," I pressed.

"He's a very interesting character," Slater said, warming to the subject. "In the thirties, he came in second in the British Chess Championship, and last year he was made British chess master for life. He's a bachelor and lives with his mother and sister."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Is he a good tutor?"

"He doesn't prepare one for Schools, if that's what you mean," Slater said. "He sets topics for tutorials which are not really examination questions. I suppose he believes that university education should be broader than just preparing undergraduates to do well in Schools. Anyway, lawyers at Balliol as a group don't seem to do as well in Schools as lawyers in other colleges."

"Do you get on with him?"

"Well enough," Slater said. "People say that he was a great tutor between the wars but he has gone off somewhat since then. He's still good at cross-examining and finding out the extent of our knowledge and ability, but if he has made his mind up on a particular point in law he regards that as the final word. In this he may be no different from a lot of tutors who have reached their fifties and think that they've given a lot of thought to a particular issue and solved it to their satisfaction, and who tend, therefore, to be a little impatient with anyone who challenges them. Certainly, if one disagrees with Tylor, he comes back very vigorously, and he gives the impression of being very put out. So, in the end, one comes away with respect for him but, I suppose, not affection. In fact, we are all terrified of him."

The more Slater talked, the more anxious I grew about being forced to study with Tylor. (After all, he had admitted me, and, for all I knew, my admission was only for reading law.) He seemed the antithesis of a good tutor—of a tutor who made his students feel that they were partners in a search for truth. Also, Tylor seemed very rigid—a quality I associated with the blind generally. Since the blind achieve mastery of the world with difficulty, they order it in their minds and are therefore inordinately preoccupied with order. Indeed, he might even be like the many blind people who reject new information and new ideas for fear that they might be overwhelmed by them.

I confided to Slater that I was no longer sure that I wanted to read law. Slater was taken aback. "I wouldn't have thought you could change your mind like that," he said. "Tylor is expecting you to be his pupil."

Tylor stopped by my room a half hour before tea, just as Slater had said he would. "How are you getting on?" he asked.

"All right, sir," I said, offering him a chair. I should have avoided saying "right," I thought. But the only alternative I could think of, "O.K.," sounded American and colloquial, not at all in keeping with the Lord Peter Wimsey ambiance.

"I have an old dear who has been reading to me for some years," Mr. Tylor said, remaining standing. "She has some extra time, and I've

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arranged for her to read to you. She didn't go to university, but she has a good heart and charges two and six an hour."

Tylor came across as a retired colonel, talking in an essentially inflectionless, emphatic way, in a sort of "broadcasting voice," which blind people who are not socially well adapted sometimes develop in compensation for lack of eye contact and spontaneous gestures. I wanted to make a clean breast of my decision not to read law, but his authoritative voice stopped me. Anyway, he was waiting for my response to his offer of a reader.

"I prefer readers who are university graduates," I said timidly, trying to enunciate my *t*'s as clearly as I could. "They are more expensive, but, in the long run, I find they save me money, because they are faster and more efficient."

I feared he would take umbrage, but he said, "The old dears I use are anything but efficient. They often fall asleep reading to me." He laughed. I thought it was princely of him to be so reasonable—not to press me to adopt his arrangements.

"Let's go along to tea," he said. "Puggy is waiting for us in the car at the back gate."

We set out for the back gate. Just as I was on the verge of telling him about my decision, he started telling me about himself. He said that he had been blind from birth, though he had some perception of light, which helped him to get around. His father, a successful architect in Bournville, Birmingham, had sent him to Worcester (the best school for the blind in England, I knew). From there he had come up straight to Balliol to read law in 1918, when he was eighteen. "I got my obligatory First and stayed on for a B.C.L. Although I got a Second in it, that didn't get in the way of my staying on at Balliol and teaching. I'm hoping you will be able to pull off a First and do a B.C.L."

He has been at Balliol for thirty-eight years, I thought. His life seems so straightforward in contrast to mine. For a fleeting moment, I was tempted to follow his example and read law. Who knew? If I did well, I might one day succeed him. But I recoiled from the thought even as I was tempted by it.

We were at the back gate, and, thinking it was now or never, I blurted out, "I don't think I want to read law."

He stood still and remained unnervingly silent for a moment or two, and then asked, "Why not?" I could detect in his booming voice a note of disappointment and annoyance.

I hesitantly gave him some of my reasons, fully expecting him to shout at me and ask me why I hadn't thought of them before I sought admission to Balliol in his subject. Instead, he said, in a matter-of-fact way, "Law is particularly suited to blind people."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm not blind," I said. Then, realizing how foolish that sounded, I quickly added, "I mean, reading law makes no sense for me unless I know where I'm going to live—India or America. I would rather read philosophy, politics, and economics—P.P.E. seems to have the kind of general syllabus that would be useful no matter where I lived."

"I'll sound out the Modern Greats tutors and see what they think," he said.

Each freshman had to be interviewed by the Master. I felt extremely intimidated, recalling that I would be talking to someone who wore the mantle of Benjamin Jowett, the great Master of Balliol in the nineteenth century. Jowett had set Balliol on its course of world eminence; had instituted educational reforms that helped to lay the foundations of modern, secular Oxford and of the Indian Civil Service, which he opened to competition; had established the tradition of Balliol men succeeding in Schools and going on to fill the tutorships and headships of other colleges and take prominent places in both houses of Parliament and at the bar; had left a permanent mark on English scholarship and theology; and had made translations of Plato that became English classics. A contemporary of Jowett, Henry Charles Beeching, voiced the esteem in which Jowett was held, writing:

> First come I; my name is Jowett.
> There's no knowledge but I know it.
> I am Master of this college:
> What I don't know isn't knowledge.

On the appointed day, I knocked with trepidation at the door of the Master's lodgings and was received by the Master himself—Sir David Lindsay Keir, the author of the standard *Constitutional History of Modern Britain Since 1845*, which had gone through half a dozen editions since it was first published, in 1938. In contrast to the American practice, where the head of a college tended to be a fund-raiser, selected by a group of businessmen serving as trustees of the institution, the head of an Oxford college tended to be an important scholar, elected by its Fellows, who, acting together, formed its governing body. Keir was known wherever British government had influence or was studied. The mere fact that everyone, from the pantry lad to the Senior Fellow, addressed him as "Master" was awe-inspiring.

As soon as I sat down, the Master asked me a question. I didn't catch a single word. He spoke like someone who had had a throat operation. "I beg your pardon, Master," I said, in my most polite manner. He repeated the question. I still didn't catch it. I strained to hear what he would say next.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What games to you play, Mr. Mehta?"

"Games, Master?" I exclaimed, taken aback. I don't know quite what I had expected from the interview, but I had imagined that it was his way of welcoming a new member to the college and of putting a name to a face—that at most he would ask me something about my Indian background and my American schooling.

"Yes. Cricket? Rugby? Tennis?" He spoke in a monotone, with a heavy Scots accent.

I could scarcely believe my ears. Perhaps he asks questions of freshmen by rote, I thought. "Such games are not suitable for a blind person," I said.

"Then what games do you play?" he asked.

I was surprised by his insistence. "I play no games, Master," I said. The atmosphere of the interview was so formulaic that it didn't occur to me until later that I could have mentioned that I liked to fly kites and to bicycle, and that I rode and swam a little.

"You play no games?" he echoed. His voice was so flat that it was almost sepulchral. "What are your plans for afterlife?"

"Afterlife, Master?" I repeated stupidly. I couldn't believe that he was interested in my fantasies about immortality.

"Yes, afterlife," he said. And then, perhaps thinking that because I was a foreigner my English was weak, he added, "Your life after Balliol."

"Oh, that! I don't know, Master." That part of my life seemed so distant.

"Mr. Tylor thinks that you might get a First in jurisprudence," he said. "If you do, that should certainly help you to do well in your afterlife." The Oxford honors degrees were ranked from First through Fourth, and very few students in any subject in any year were awarded a First.

"With Mr. Tylor's permission, Master, I've switched to P.P.E."

"What say? This is a surprise to us, since everyone is admitted to read a particular subject." Without waiting for me to explain, he went on, "I don't think you've told me what your ambition for afterlife is."

I almost blurted out, "Prime Minister, Master." My father was sure that with an Oxford degree I could become Prime Minister of India. But then when my oldest sister played through "Give Me Five Minutes More" on the violin for the first time he had also thought that she would be another Paganini.

"I don't know about my afterlife, Master," I said.

"I'm sure you're aware, Mr. Mehta, that three Balliol men in their afterlife became viceroys of India," the Master was saying.

As an Indian from the Empire, I knew all too well that fifteen viceroys had come from Oxford and that three of them—the Fifth Marquess of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lansdowne, Lord Elgin, and Lord Curzon—were Balliol men. "Yes, Master," I said.

"Thank you. This has been an agreeable conversation."

I went to my room, shaking from the meeting. I had always basked in the good opinion of my teachers and of the heads of institutions that I attended, but, for some reason, I had got off on the wrong foot with the Master, and I felt that there was no way I could rectify the situation. When I calmed down, however, I realized that not being in the Master's good graces gave me little to fear except the reproaches of my conscience.

My first Oxford tutorial was in philosophy, and it was with John Patrick Corbett, who taught in the library tower, on the front quandrangle. Holding on to the wrought-iron rail, I nervously climbed the flights of well-worn stone steps. Another Tylor, no doubt, I thought. Yet I reasoned that I should be able to acquit myself better in a tutorial in philosophy than in a tutorial in jurisprudence, for while I was an ignoramus in law, I was acquainted with a diverse body of philosophical thought, through philosophy courses I had taken at Pomona.

Halfway up the steps, I met an American friend who had just finished his tutorial with Corbett. "Good luck," he said, and he paused to tell me, "When I first started doing my tutorials with Corbett, I hadn't done any philosophy. I couldn't imagine that anyone could be worked up about things like where the mind ends and the body begins. It all seemed to me like common sense. One day, after I finished reading my essay—I believe it was my fourth tutorial—Corbett said to me, 'I feel that I'm being hit over the head from all sides. I don't know where it's coming from.' I said, 'I felt the same way when I was writing it.' I must have lost fifteen or twenty pounds in my first term of philosophy."

I continued up the treacherous steps and, trying to control my nervousness, knocked at Corbett's door.

"Come in!" The invitation came across almost as a shout. Either the great man has been interrupted in the middle of a thought or he doesn't realize how his voice carries, I reflected.

I felt weak in the knees, but I walked in, gently closing the door behind me. The room was warm and comfortable and had a pleasant smell of pipe tobacco. Corbett was standing near the gas fire, rolling back and forth on the balls of his feet, as if he were trying to grapple with a particularly recalcitrant thought.

"Ah, Mehta, you found your way to my room," he said suavely. He had a pipe between his teeth.

It was my first meeting with Corbett, and I put out my hand. He didn't so much as take a step toward me. The Master had shaken my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand, but maybe that's not done in tutorials, I thought. Feeling uncouth, I dropped my hand.

"Do sit down," Corbett said kindly.

I took a chair. It was identical to the one in my room, right down to the foam-rubber cushions, as if there were something distinctive, though not necessarily distinguished, about Oxford furniture.

"What ph-philosophical works have you read? Or perhaps I should ask, rather: Have you done any philosophy?" Corbett inquired, taking the pipe out of his mouth, and rolling back and forth. He had a little stammer, which seemed to be not so much a speech impediment as a mannerism. (I had noticed that some people at Oxford actually cultivated a stammer, as if to underscore the transition from thought to speech.)

"I studied philosophy with W. T. Jones," I said proudly. He was perhaps the most distinguished scholar at my college in America, and I felt sure that he would have a reputation in Oxford.

Instead of sounding impressed, Corbett said, "Never heard of the chap—who is he?" His voice was very English, and he had what I imagined was a perfect Oxford accent—plummy but clear. His voice radiated self-confidence and a sense of well-being and had the timbre and range of a musical instrument.

"You must know W. T. Jones," I said.

"I don't know any Jones in the first rank of philosophers anywhere," he said flatly.

"But he was a Rhodes scholar and did a B.Litt. at Oriel College."

"That degree is for Americans," he said, in a "That's for the birds" tone. "B.Litt. is not an examination degree. It's a low-level research degree. Many Americans choose to do it, because they can't stand the rigor of Schools." Corbett himself had read P.P.E. and had got a First in Schools, which was a sine qua non for teaching at Oxford.

"But he wrote a big book on the history of Western philosophy," I persisted. "It's a textbook used in a lot of American colleges."

"I d-despise textbooks," Corbett said. "It's a p-packaged form of education that is a substitute for thinking."

"But the Master's *Constitutional History* is a textbook."

"That's different," he said. "That's like a legal casebook."

"Dr. Jones's book isn't a typical textbook—it gives you big chunks of quotations from the philosophers themselves," I said.

"*Reader's Digest* of philosophy, eh?" he said, with a big laugh.

"Jones doesn't condense philosophers—he gives extracts from them," I said, still trying to rally to the defense of my old teacher and mentor.

"Extracts, eh?" Corbett said, with another big laugh. "And why do you think extracts are better than condensations? You aren't saying less

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is more, are you?" He began pacing, as if he'd finished with the subject and wanted to get on to something else.

Next to my father, Dr. Jones was perhaps the man I admired most. But part of my admiration for him was that he seemed quintessentially Oxford. Here was Corbett, however, telling me that Jones wasn't: that, in fact, Jones knew the Oxford tutorial method and the Oxford system of impersonal examiners—which he had always held up as a model for education—only at second hand.

"You still haven't told me what ph-philosophical works you've read," Corbett went on.

"I've read in the works of many ancient and modern philosophers."

"Yes," he said distantly, as if he were trying to imagine my California education.

"I take it, then, that you don't at all approve of a historical approach to philosophy," I said.

"I don't know that it matters what I approve or don't approve. What I think is irrelevant. Would you not agree that reading philosophical works merely in a historical context reduces them to the domain of historical ideas?"

"Then how does one do philosophy? How is philosophy done here?"

"We do problems of philosophy, the way you might do problems of mathematics. 'Are there universals?' is addressing a philosophical problem that philosophers, in one way or another, have been grappling with since at least the time of Plato. Would you like to do an essay on 'Are there universals?' What I am interested in is your own ideas about the question, so don't trot out what this philosopher said and what that philosopher said, à la an American term paper."

For me, writing about problems in philosophy was a whole new way of looking at philosophy. Jones's philosophical approach and, by extension, his philosophical textbook suddenly seemed parochial. I wondered if he had presented a shortcut to philosophical education, whereas Corbett was introducing me, at that very moment, to the Socratic method—the heart of philosophical education and, by analogy, of the tutorial method. With the zeal of a convert, I was quick to criticize the old in the light of the new. (In later years, I read many new books by Jones and rediscovered my admiration for him.) The prospect of writing the essay was exhilarating.

"Do you have any suggestions for readings?" I asked.

"Well, you might want to look at. . . ." He rattled off names of authors.

I tried to slow him down by asking him for the first names of the authors and the titles of their books. "Any particular book by Laserowitz?" I asked at one point. He obliged, but my questions seemed to make him impatient. It appeared that for him all the authors were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

members of a scholarly family, and everyone in the community was expected to know them. The upshot was that for the essay I should consult A. D. Woozley's *Theory of Knowledge*, David Pears's *The Nature of Metaphysics*, H. H. Price's *Thinking and Representation*, Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and Morris Laserowitz's articles.

I was afraid that if I asked him which parts of the books I should read the question would invite derision. And yet the idea of getting someone to read aloud half a dozen philosophical works within a week for one of two weekly essays I had to write (the other was in economics) seemed a near impossibility. Indeed, I felt I could spend a whole week studying just Locke. So I found myself asking him if he wanted me to read particular chapters in the books.

"Just look at the books and read what catches your interest," he said.

Look at the books. That was a visual command, no doubt asking me to skim them. But there was no way for an ordinary reader to do such a thing for me. I thought he would understand that. At the same time, I didn't want him to make any special concessions for me. I always wanted to be treated like anyone else. It was a matter of pride and also of principle. So I said, rather lamely, "Catches my interest?"

"Just get hold of their arguments."

I may have been a convert, but now I found myself being a backslider, and hankering after my old teacher, who not only would have written the full names and titles of the books on the blackboard but would have directed us to the exact pages containing the gist of the arguments, or to a textbook. And later he would have recapitulated the arguments in a lecture, almost making the reading optional. (Oxford lectures were usually not summaries of published material but, rather, the results of research and thinking.) It now seemed to me that the American system of education, built around textbooks and lectures, was particularly well suited to someone in my situation, who had to take in most information by ear. But I consoled myself with the thought that the Oxford system promised to make me a true scholar.

There was a knock—another pupil at the door. "Well, we have to stop now," Corbett said.

I automatically put out my hand, but then stuck both hands deep in my pockets and hastily made my way out.

When people heard that I was doing P.P.E., they would say, "God help you! You'll have Balogh." Thomas Balogh, a Hungarian refugee, was notorious for setting his own rules for what he called "the tutorial game." It took me the first couple of weeks of the term simply to find

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him. When I finally caught up with him, in his room, he said, "Well, well, my little poppet, what have you come here to do?"

"P.P.E.," I said, trying not to smile at his way of talking. Anyway, I wasn't sure if "my little poppet" was an affectation or a translation of a perfectly ordinary Hungarian phrase.

"What economics have you read, darling?" he asked.

"Paul Samuelson's *Economics*, among others."

"That's not nearly enough," he said. "Go read some more, and then come for a tutorial."

Balogh wouldn't deign to tell me what to read, but he gave me a time, a date, and the name of my tutorial partner, who was an American. "He's a real donkey—you'll be well matched," he said wryly.

During my first tutorial with Balogh, my partner read aloud an essay he had written on the accounting of national income. During the reading, Balogh lay before the open fire, or sat in a chair next to a huge pile of mail. He would pick up a letter from the pile, noisily open it, read it, crumple it up, and toss it over his shoulder. At one point, he actually got up and visited the lavatory, leaving the door open and insisting over his shoulder that the reading should proceed.

In the middle of the discussion of the essay, he excused himself to go to the porter's lodge and, when he returned, feigned surprise that we had not continued with the argument.

"But you weren't here to listen to the argument," I said.

"Well, well, my little poppet, you won't do well in Schools if you take that attitude," he told me. "The examiner will be interested in your views, not mine. Keep your eyes fixed on results in Schools, darling, and you won't go wrong."

The mention of Schools struck terror in my heart. He may be a brilliant, if eccentric, economist, but is he going to be any help in preparing me for Schools?

"What did you think of my essay?" my partner asked him boldly. Balogh proceeded to tell him what was wrong with the "American animals"—the authors of the book that my partner had based his essay on.

"I don't think you've read this book, Mr. Balogh," my partner said.

"'Tommy,' please. You're right—I couldn't stand to read those two asses."

In the remaining five minutes of the tutorial, Balogh gave a brilliant disquisition on the accounting of national income. His remarks on authorities were, by turns, irreverent, scornful, and impish, with flashes of humor. Just as they say, Oxford is full of queer birds, I thought, and this bird is full of suppressed fury—a kind of wild energy that is very engaging. Maybe the best education, by its very nature, is idiosyncratic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The corollary to the Oxford system of impersonal examiners, however, was a responsible, conscientious tutor. Balogh, who was known to be a good husband and father—something that was important to me—had been a Fellow of the college for fifteen years and had a good professional reputation. But if he doesn't keep his antics under control he is bound to make a hash of the tutorials, I thought.

At the end of the tutorial, to my great relief, he said to me, "I like Indians, Mehta. One day, we will get on like a house afire. But I think it's best that for your first term of economics you go to Paul Streeten. He's a sober chap—just right for you."

In the end, I was never taught by Balogh. We did, however, become good friends later in life, when he was Lord Balogh and was celebrated for having been an economics adviser to Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

I did several essays for Streeten, an Austrian refugee, who was the other economist at Balliol. I enjoyed doing economics with Streeten, an extremely poised, charming man, who had a much steadier hand on the tiller than Balogh did. It turned out that I had a considerable aptitude for the subject. But there was a rub: my readers literally fell asleep reading the economics material.

Employing competent, intelligent readers had always been difficult, but I soon discovered that at Oxford the problem was compounded, because ordinarily I could not engage fellow students to be my readers. Not only was there no tradition at Oxford of combining work and study, but students husbanded their time in pursuit of their own interests during the short, intensive university terms and deserted the place during the long breaks in the academic year. I was therefore compelled to find readers from outside the university, and that involved placing advertisements in local newspapers. After a long search, I was able to find only two good readers—Major Bottomley and a young divorcée, Elizabeth Lumsden, who had two small children. Neither of them was able to handle the economics material; for one thing, it was extremely mathematical, and, for another, understanding it depended a lot on graphs.

Streeten and I reached the same conclusion—that since there was no way for me to work through graphs and mathematical formulas with readers, economics would remain my weak suit in P.P.E., and therefore I should read in some other school. I felt crushed, for I had done several essays for Corbett in philosophy and was enjoying the subject hugely. But there seemed to be no alternative.

I decided to talk to John Bryson and explore the possibility of reading in the Honours School of English Language and Literature. So few

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people read English at Balliol that he taught the whole syllabus himself. Bryson was sixty years old and had the reputation of being a real gentleman who didn't like to exert himself; he was the only Fellow who had a personal servant. He was a bachelor, and so was more in the tradition of the old dons, who lived and breathed for college, than of the modern dons, who tended to be married, to have families, and to live in houses outside college. He was also old-fashioned in that he did not feel the need to publish; he had not written a single book. I was told that he was a notable collector of Pre-Raphaelite drawings and also of some oils and was said to be interested more in his art than in teaching. I wrote him a note and got an appointment.

I knocked at his door. He invited me in and offered me a chocolate. I declined, worrying about the chocolate sticking to my new dental bridge, which had just been made for me by an Oxford dentist known for his "crown and bridge" practice. As it was, the bridge was making talking difficult.

I explained to Bryson my problem with economics and told him that I was thinking about switching to English.

"But why do you want to read English?" he asked. "People should go to university to learn things they can't learn on their own. But anybody can enjoy literature. Did you know that until the twentieth century you couldn't read English literature at a university in England? It's really a school for women."

"But you read English."

"I was probably too lazy to read anything that required effort, and I knew from quite early days that I wouldn't have to work very hard for my keep. Lord David Cecil is a much better scholar than I, and he read history." Lord David was the Goldsmiths' Professor of English Literature at Oxford.

"But I'm interested in writing."

"There are lots and lots of writers who didn't read English literature," Bryson said, and he added, with heavy irony, "I don't think Chaucer or Shakespeare read English. If you look at the authors on the syllabus of the English Honours School, I doubt if many of them read English. As you can imagine, English is not a school that has much of a following at Balliol. Since Jowett's day, Balliol undergraduates have been interested in becoming leaders of men."

I felt that any man would want to be a "leader of men." Also, I was leery of doing anything that might be thought feminine, and I was conscious of the fact that after Oxford I would have to earn my keep. At the same time, I didn't want to be blocked from changing over to English from P.P.E. and said as much to Bryson.

"I'll, of course, be glad to have you read English," Bryson said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Would you like to write an essay on Milton for me for next week?" That's rushing things, I thought. I'll have to get permission from Corbett and Streeten to change over to English. "Term is flying by. If you want to read English, you should get started."

Bryson was right. As a graduate, I would be doing Schools in two years. (Undergraduates ordinarily did them in three years.) There was no time to lose. So I said that I would think about writing an essay on *Paradise Lost*.

"I should mention to you that a third of the school's syllabus is concerned with learning and reading Anglo-Saxon. Many Americans find that a stumbling block to reading English at Oxford. They prefer to read English at Cambridge, where there isn't the scholarly emphasis on the Middle Ages that there is here."

I asked him how it was that Anglo-Saxon was such an important part of the English syllabus.

Beowulf, he said. "The English attach great importance to *Beowulf*. It's the national epic."

I began to wonder whether it would make any sense to spend my valuable Oxford time learning Anglo-Saxon just so I could read *Beowulf*. I began to despair. Every school I thought of reading seemed to present formidable hurdles. I also wondered whether there were any Braille books for learning Anglo-Saxon.

Later, in my room, I heard thunderous footsteps in the staircase entry.

"Mehta!" Tylor said, bursting into my room. "I've been a Fellow of Balliol for twenty-seven years, and I have never heard of such ungentlemanly behavior as yours."

"What have I done, sir?" I asked, jumping up from my chair and standing at attention. I rapidly went through in my mind everything I had done since arriving at Oxford, but I couldn't imagine what he was talking about. Dr. Johnson's words flashed into my mind: "When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully."

"I was just having lunch in the S.C.R.," Tylor was bellowing. "Everyone there seemed to think that you were reading his subject. Balogh said that you've done a tutorial with him. Both Streeten and Corbett think you're writing essays for them. Bryson thinks you're writing an essay for him. And the Master is sure that you're reading law with me. In the history of the college, we've never had a situation like this. People are admitted to read a given subject, and that's what they read. I made allowances for you, because you came from America, and now you've given me some of my most vexing moments. I can forgive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anything but ungentlemanly behavior. How did you think that you could go and read English without informing the P.P.E. tutors?"

"I'm not writing an essay for Bryson—or, rather, I don't think I will be reading English literature," I said, feeling chastened.

"Why does Bryson think so, then?"

"I don't know. We discussed it, but. . . ." I couldn't go on. The explanation seemed too involved.

"You simply cannot be at Oxford for most of the Michaelmas term and give that inane answer. You can't go and read English without getting the permission of your P.P.E. tutors, and you can't now go back to reading P.P.E. without making it up with Bryson. It's two o'clock now. By six o'clock, you must apologize to all the tutors that you have put out by your behavior, and settle with them what you can read." He stormed out.

I felt shattered. Never in my adult life had anyone spoken to me as Tylor had. But was there anything that I could have said to Tylor in my defense? It was true that technically I was still in the P.P.E. school. It was also true that, while I'd gone to Bryson in a spirit of exploration, I could have left him under the impression that I might—indeed, would—be reading English. I certainly had not forthrightly objected to writing the essay on Milton. And the worst of it was that I was no closer to making up my mind about what I should read than I had been when I first got to Balliol. Maybe the accepted wisdom that blind people should read law was right, I thought. But read law with Tylor? I wished there were someone old and wise I could talk to—someone who knew the problems of the blind, and who could advise me about studying in England and about earning a livelihood in India or America. The natural person would have been my father. But he had such exalted ideas about my abilities and my future that he could not be of much help. Anyway, he was in America.

I staggered out of my room without knowing where I was going or what I should do. In the quadrangle, I was accosted by the medieval history tutor, R. W. Southern. I had never met him, but his book *The Making of the Middle Ages* had impressed me deeply. I had recently learned that he wrote it while he was in the hospital recovering from tuberculosis, with his wife and his friends carrying books back and forth for him. (According to one story, his bed had been pointed toward natural light, which was considered healthful but made reading difficult, and, moreover, he had had to hide his books from a particularly vigilant Sister Barker, and sometimes the collection of books under his blankets had reached from his ankles to his shoulders.)

"Mr. Mehta, you look troubled," he said. His voice had none of the broadcasting power of Tylor's, or the formidable presence of Corbett's,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or the half-seductive, half-mocking tones of Balogh's, or the natural elegance of Bryson's. It was gentle but not meek. On the contrary, it was remarkable for a steely determination.

I nodded. I was in a welter of emotion, and I feared that if I opened my mouth I would dissolve into tears. I finally got out, "It all has to do with what I'm to read at Balliol."

"You look like a historian to me," he said.

The idea took me aback. Although I'd taken a lot of courses at Pomona in philosophy and English literature, in the end I had majored in history, and I had thought for a while of getting a Ph.D. in the subject, yet once I was admitted to Oxford I had hoped to do something different. I don't know if I can cope with the demands of the Oxford history school, I thought. There will be a lot of reading, a lot of skimming. Just to write one essay, I may have to read in a dozen books. But then everything has its drawbacks. History suddenly seemed like a possible answer.

"I did history in America," I said.

"Maybe, then, you can do a D.Phil. in history. You should talk about that with Rodge." A. B. Rodger was the senior tutor in history. "But I should say that people who do an undergraduate degree here get the most out of Oxford."

"Before I do anything, I have to apologize to the P.P.E. and English tutors, and, yes, Tylor," I said, trying to hold back my tears. "How will I explain to them my switching subjects for the third time?"

"You can tell them that the historians will be glad to have you read modern history." Then, with a preoccupied air, he asked, "By the way, Mehta, which way was I going?"

"You were coming from the S.C.R., sir," I said.

"Then I've had my lunch," he said. He continued on his way.

He's the most extraordinary combination of the worldly and the unworldly, I thought. Indeed, it later became a legend in college that Southern was so unworldly that he often forgot whether or not he had had his lunch. When I came to work with him, I never knew him to have a lapse of memory or to be absentminded about anything. But on that fateful day, he actually did make the remark about his lunch, unless I dreamed it.

A. B. Rodger—Rodge, as he was known—was the son of an Edinburgh minister and had become a Fellow of the college in 1924 (five years before Tylor and thirteen years before Southern), but, like Bryson, he had never published a book or an article.

"Yes, my boy," he said when I went to see him on the afternoon of my *crise*. "Sit down. Sit down." He himself remained standing, jingling the coins in his pocket and whistling under his breath.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I started to tell him about my conversation with Southern.

"Dick Southern has resolved your problem," he said. "Isn't that right, my boy?"

I said that that wasn't quite right.

He resumed his jingling and whistling.

I told him as quickly as I could that I was wondering if I should do a D.Phil. or an undergraduate degree.

He sat down and began to enumerate the pros and cons of both. He said that a D.Phil. from Oxford was very useful, especially in America. Indeed, it had been specifically devised, early in the century, for American Rhodes scholars. But I should be aware that postgraduate education at Oxford was very different from what it was at an American university. In America, postgraduate students were put through a lot of course work, the purpose of which was to make them into college teachers. Graduate schools there were like professional schools. At Oxford, in contrast, it was assumed that, if one wanted to teach at a university, one got trained for it as an undergraduate. In fact, most dons had just read in an Honours School, obtained a First, got themselves elected Fellow and Tutor, and settled down to teaching, as he had. The reason an English university could function that way was that the work boys did in English schools was of a much higher standard than that done in comparable American schools; English schoolboys coming up to Oxford knew more about their subjects than did Americans who arrived with college degrees. The truth was that postgraduate education was simply not taken seriously at Oxford. There was no specific program or provision for it. Students were just left alone to get on with their research and theses. They had to satisfy no requirements—had no examination save for the defense of the thesis. And writing a D.Phil. thesis was just like writing a book. Since I had written a book, I was, no doubt, used to doing a sustained piece of work, and therefore the writing of a thesis shouldn't present me with a problem. But he couldn't emphasize strongly enough that anyone doing a postgraduate degree at Oxford plowed a lonely furrow. Consequently, he, like Southern, would advise me to do a second undergraduate degree. That way, I would get the most out of Oxford. And many people who arrived at Oxford with foreign degrees—from America, Australia, India—did exactly that. It was the best way of entering the stream of Oxford education and English life. In fact, the great thing about an Oxford undergraduate education was that one learned as much from one's contemporaries as one did from one's tutors.

"My boy, let me have your answer. Will you read modern history or do a D.Phil.?" he demanded, getting up from his chair.

"Do you want to know that right now?" I asked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Right now, my boy."

He redoubled his whistling and the jingling of his coins while marching around the room. There was something military in his manner. (He had fought in both wars and had been wounded several times.) "Yes, my boy?"

A D.Phil. will give me a leg up in the American academic world, I thought. That will enable me to teach at a university and have a certain amount of security and comfort. It seemed like a sensible route. But it didn't hold the promise of making me an Oxford man in the way that Southern was, and Rodge and Tylor were.

"The heart of Oxford is the tutorial system. And that's only for undergraduates, my boy," he said. Jingle, jingle.

He was right. If I was only going to do research and write a book, there was no need for me to be at Oxford. I could do that anywhere.

Jingle, jingle.

I'd been speaking English for only seven years, and I wrote it like a foreigner, without an innate sense of language or style. What could be better training for thinking and writing than being required to come up with two essays every week and having them scrutinized by the likes of Southern—or, come to that, Rodge, who might not have a reputation outside Oxford but had a wonderfully concise way of putting things? Still, I wavered.

"Which is it to be—Dr. Mehta or Mr. Mehta?" he asked.

That settled the question, for the sound of "Dr. Mehta" sent shudders through me. That's my father's name, my father's title, I thought. What am I, and what is he? He is Hyperion to little more than a satyr.

"I'll read modern history," I said.

"Then, my boy, you'll be a real Oxford man," he said. "I thought you were a sensible chap."

By six o'clock that evening, I had called on Corbett, Balogh, Streeten, and Bryson, and made my apologies. They were extremely friendly and wished me well—as, indeed, did Tylor, my last port of call.

My first essay for Southern, which I submitted around the middle of the Michaelmas term, was about the Saxons in England in the sixth century. I had spent the whole past week reading or consulting half a dozen books and taking notes on them, and had stayed up half the night outlining in my head and typing out the essay. (Later, I began dictating my essays, because that way I could not only revise the text but also consult and quote sources.)

Southern had decided to tutor me on my own (generally, history pupils were taken in pairs), and since I wasn't able to read my essay aloud, he read it to himself. At one point, he read a sentence aloud. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

experience of hearing my words read aloud by one of the leading medievalists in the world was devastating. The sentence sounded like gobbledygook, and I feared that the whole essay was no better.

"It's dreadful," I said.

He laughed, but in a kindly way. "I don't like 'motivation' in the sentence. It sounds like jargon. And don't you think it's jarring to come upon it in a discussion of the sixth century?"

"What about 'impulse'?" I asked.

"Yes, better," he said.

He's just on the third page, I thought. He hasn't got even halfway through the essay. He's not going to read on. Why should he? It must be tedious—boring for him to read my feeble effort to explain something that he knows so well. But he resumed reading.

Southern finally put down the result of my week's labor and said, distantly, "Yes." Then, fastening on one seemingly minor point in the essay, he asked me if I was right in assuming, as I had, that between half a million and a million Saxons had crossed over to England. How many ships did I think that such a host would need for transportation? Where did I suppose that the invaders would get the timber to build the ships? How long did I imagine that it would take them to build each ship? How long did I think the stretch of water was that they had to cross? How much did I think was the rate of increase in the Saxon population once they had settled in Britain? What would I estimate was the total population of Britain at that time?

I tried to address his questions. Each time, he easily disposed of my answers by referring me to a source at hand; his large desk was stacked with books and tomes. He would reach for a book and read aloud a passage or describe a picture, always in the spirit of sharing information rather than of correcting me. He knew not only where each book was but also where anything in a particular book was to be found.

When the tutorial was over, he stood up and opened the door for me. As I was leaving, he said, "By the way, you don't have to exhibit your reading in your essay. It should just be a point of departure."

God, even the facts are gratuitous, I thought. How am I to write my next essay? "I'd like to improve my writing," I said.

"I think you might find reading *The Oxford Book of English Prose* a help," he said.

I left my first tutorial feeling at once depressed at having been shown up as an ignoramus and exhilarated at being on the threshold of a new order of study. I reflected that history was not just facts to be memorized—names, dates, battles—but a matter for judgment, speculation, and imagination. It was a bit like doing detective work, or marshaling evidence in a courtroom, or going deep-sea fishing. History tutorials will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be very stimulating, but they will also require a lot of slogging work, I thought.

In the quadrangle, I ran into Tom Braun and told him about my tutorial with Southern. "If all my tutorials are like that, I'm not going to have much leisure to enjoy Oxford," I said.

"You look like a nice chap to me," he said. "You don't look to me like one of these awful troglodytes, whom all good chaps shun much as Christians must have shunned Lazarus."

"Oh, Tom, for God's sake!" I said.

He became sympathetic. "Once you get the hang of writing essays, you'll be able to toss them off. Maurice Keen is a top medieval historian in the making, and I can't say that I've ever seen him laboring over anything very long or hard. In fact, I just saw him in the Buttery with a large glass of whiskey in his hand."

"But it's not twelve yet," I said.

"Actually, he looked as if he'd just got up. No doubt he has whiskey to start the day. That's what makes him such a good historian."

In subsequent weeks, I handed Southern essays on "The Character and Extent of Anglo-Saxon Influences on the Continent in the Eighth Century"; "The Aims of St. Dunstan, St. Ethewold, and St. Oswald"; "How Far Do the Existing Anglo-Saxon Laws Help in Forming a Picture of the Classes in Society and Their Changing Relations Between c. 600 and 1066?"; "Which of the Sources Give Us the Best Picture of Alfred?"; "Compare the Position of the King in English Society in the Reigns of Edgar, Canute, and Edward the Confessor"; "The Prelude to an Inevitable Collapse—Can This View of Edward the Confessor's Reign Be Defended?"; and "Does the Reign of Stephen Show That the Baronage Had No Political Aim Beyond Their Individual Personal Advantage?"

I would arrive at Southern's room for a tutorial, and he would have his nose in a book. He would look up and say, "Oh, Mehta. Do come in." After I sat down, he would ask, "Have you got an essay?" and then sound almost surprised that I did have one. Sometimes during a tutorial, Sir Maurice Powicke, who was the éminence grise of medieval history, a diminutive man in his late seventies, would stick his head in, and, in his rather quiet voice, would go through some elaborate apology to the effect that he couldn't accept Dick's offer to take him for a drive, because the dean, who had a larger and more powerful car, had also offered to take him for a drive the same afternoon.

Southern, like some of the Anglo-Saxon saints he introduced me to, was gentle and dedicated to learning. Still, I felt restive about the study of the so-called Dark Ages. My grasp of Latin was too weak for me to appreciate the original documents. In any case, the period was too

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remote, the documentation too fragmentary, the reading material too intractable to get me passionately involved, for all Southern's luminous intelligence. In part because of Southern's stature among the Balliol history tutors, medieval history was an important part of the study of British history. And the study of British history formed the spinal column of the modern-history school, although only three out of ten examination papers were strictly concerned with it. Not only were we required to know British history continuously from the fifth century to the First World War, but many of the optional papers we could offer were directly or indirectly connected with it. (Two of the examination papers were in our assigned "special subject," and the only special subject that dealt with India was "Great Britain and India in the Age of Warren Hastings.") I had no trouble imagining the rationale for this concentration on British history: we were at an English university; much of the syllabus was based on the study of documents, and most of the documents that were available and accessible were in English or in related languages; the methods and tools we acquired in our study of Britain could easily be applied to the study of any other country; and so on. Yet I found the emphasis on British history oppressive. Had my mother country and my adopted country fought for their independence only to have me knuckle under to British history, I wondered.

I so venerated Southern that I was tongue-tied in his presence, but when I had done half a dozen tutorials with him I aired my reservations to him, going as far as to say that I had doubts about continuing in the history school.

"Maybe I should do the D.Phil. after all," I said.

"Studying at Oxford is rather like joining the church," he said distantly, in the manner of a priest talking to a parishioner. "You know that the university has been here for centuries and that countless generations of undergraduates have benefited from studying here. You have to take it on faith that since the system worked for them it will work for you."

His simple remark made me remember a few lines from Browning:

> All we have gained then by our unbelief
> Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
> For one of faith diversified by doubt:
> We called the chess-board white—we call it black.

I wrote to my father at the end of my first term:

I can't forget that my formal schooling was so sketchy that in practically any Western country except America I couldn't have gone to college. In fact, I'm a beneficiary of the American education system, which, indulgent in time and resources, can afford to give a lot of people a chance to go to college. At the same

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time, I hate to think how much time I wasted in college being taught subjects without substance. Even subjects with substance, like history, were spoon-fed to us with potted textbooks and lectures. We were simply jollied along on what Jasper calls "soft guff." The education system almost encouraged us to get a degree without exerting ourselves. In any event, we became adept at balancing hard courses with "soft" courses, and professors who were strict graders with those who were easy graders. At no point was our work subjected to evaluation by independent examiners.

One can fault the English education system for being hierarchical at every stage. Even the schools at Oxford are hierarchical, with Greats at the top. Still, how I wish now that, like so many Greats men here, I had become proficient in Latin and Greek when I was in my early teens. If one doesn't acquire certain abilities to do difficult things at an early age, one never will. Yet it has to be borne in mind that one may acquire such abilities only at the expense of other things—rather like training from childhood to be a champion swimmer, which gets in the way of developing other skills. Indeed, undergraduates here often give the impression that their intellectual development has got ahead of their emotional life, perhaps because they were often sequestered at school, where they were taught a lot very intensively, in an almost regimented manner. (Jasper told me the other day that during his last year at school he and a friend went to the headmaster one Saturday and asked him for permission to go and see a highbrow film in town. The headmaster said, "It would be so easy for me to say yes. Therefore, I will say no." After coming from that kind of authoritarian environment, the freedom at university to sleep, eat, and do what one likes at any time of the day or night is no doubt inspiriting.)

The system insists on specialization at such an early age and is so narrowly based that it can be extravagant both in expenditure of money and in use of teachers' energies. Certainly that is true of the Oxford tutorial system. A good tutor generally seems to find this method of teaching very tiring. For one thing, he has to spend many hours teaching just a few pupils, individually or in pairs. For another, he must often have to listen to many essays on similar topics. Then, too, a good tutor must tailor the tutorial to the needs and abilities of each pupil. He may say to himself, "This chap is slow. He wants handholding," or "This chap understands everything. He wants stretching."

There is no doubt an element of the bogus in many of the justifications offered for the system. No matter how good it is in theory, in practice it is a frosty affair if one has a tutor who is incompetent or who squashes one's arguments simply because they are contrary to his own notions. I've already had one tutor who didn't remember what I was supposed to be writing on until I arrived at his door. Even a good tutor will not be equally successful with all his pupils, for a good tutorial is like playing tennis—it takes two to make it work. On at least one occasion, I undermined my tutorial with Southern because I didn't stand up to him in an argument, thinking that he knew ten times as much as I did about the topic. Another time, I had a futile tutorial because my partner turned up without an essay when it was his turn to read. Also, there can be clashes of personality between tutor and pupil, which can sour the relationship. In fact, the system can work at all only if there has been a careful selection of both tutors and pupils. Colleges elect their tutors, and the tutors in particular subjects admit the undergraduates they are going to teach.

Not only the undergraduates but also, in a sense, the tutors work under the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

goad of an impersonal examination at the end of it all, for it is the tutor's responsibility to steer his pupils to the best and the latest material in the field and to raise the kind of questions in a tutorial that will prepare the pupil for the uncertainties of an impersonal examination. Since there is no way to predict the kinds of questions the examiners might ask, the examination ultimately has the effect of evaluating both the tutors and their pupils. Thus, there are tutors who have a good reputation for teaching, because they are up on the latest research and scholarly arguments in their subject; their pupils tend to perform better in Schools year after year. Similarly, there are tutors who have bad reputations, because they are indolent or are simply resting on their laurels; their pupils tend to perform less well. So, finally, the system depends on the examiners. It presupposes that the examiners will set questions that are fair and will give undergraduates a chance to shine; the Oxford examination questions are always published, and become part of the public record of the university, so there is a sort of a check on the examiners.

Merely writing the letter made me feel that I had entered the stream of Oxford education and English life.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of Mice and Men

WENDY BARKER

1.

We are setting the traps, packs of D-Con, overrun
again by mice, rolls of paper towels chewed through,
soft nests of leavings
over the floor.

In the pantry the dog food sack leaks
from a small hole at the bottom, kibble and bird seed
line the floor along with clumps
of the litter left after the hamster died.
The hamster was so old he could no longer move
to his water. You drowned him, our fourth hamster.
We decided not to replace him.

We set bait in every kitchen cupboard, wait.
By the third morning there are no more sounds
of scuttling.

I sweep the floors of the closets, clean
down to the boards.

2.

We've been here before. The loyalty of parents
when their kids perform. High school plays
can have their moments, in between the slow, jerky
changes of scenes.

We have seen him act on stage before.
But this time we don't recognize our son,
bent almost double with the weight of eighty years,
a voice older than my father's before he died.
It's not so much the wig, the fragile silver hair,
as it is the tremor in the voice, the hand.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We have read the novel, think we know
what we are in for.

But when our son repeats
to the ranch hands who want to kill his old dog,
repeats, "But I've had him from a pup,"
and when the dog is shot and David's back jerks,
when we see our son an old man turning his face to the wall,
turning into his narrow bed in front of two hundred people,
I am gripped by something harsher than stage lights,
something darker than the farthest corner of this auditorium
after everyone has gone home.

In the glare of the lobby, I cannot
find our son under the fluorescent lights
with all the other kids accepting their hugs and flowers.

How can this be my son under the face of this old, old man.
I cannot help it, I touch his neck, his cheek.
I ask him to pull off the wisps of beard, I have to know
it is still his young skin
under that white hair.

Driving home without him, we don't talk,
I lean on you the way I used to.
We thought we knew what we were in for.
We used to quote from Steinbeck's novel: I would say
"Tell me about the rabbits," and you would read
from Rodale's *Raising Small Livestock.*
You said we would build the cages so the rabbits
could be kept clean, dry, well-fed, could tend
their young. Soft, white fur.

3.

That fall morning we found
David out by the pool kneeling
over the edge, over a field mouse
he was lifting from the hose that floats on the water.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The mouse must have fallen in during the night,
must have swum to the hose and clung
until our son woke
to find him trembling under wet fur.

He dried him with a garden glove,
carried him to a hollow in the grasses, brought
bird seed from the house, and left him alone.

At first when we went to check, he was still there.
But later, when we went again, there was only
the wind sweeping the grass.

✪ WENDY BARKER is a professor of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Among her books are *Lunacy of Light: Emily Dickinson and the Experience of Metaphor* and two collections of poems, *Winter Chickens* and *Let the Ice Speak*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Discovering Columbus

LILIAN HANDLIN

AMERICANS, WHO EVENTUALLY NAMED more than sixty places in the United States after Columbus, did so in spite of a confused and controversial record. They shaped his image in accordance with their own needs. Hence popularizers with their own ideas about the mariner's utility proved more influential than scholars in defining his features. Even today—Kirkpatrick Sale, author of *The Conquest of Paradise*, and other Columbus bashers notwithstanding—the discoverer gets a favorable public rating.

The vagueness of his features can be discerned in the fact that no one even knows for sure what Columbus looked like. By the end of the nineteenth century that problem received some attention, and two serious tomes reviewed his representation in the fine arts. Their inconclusive results encouraged New York spiritualists to settle the issue by calling on the spirit of Leonardo da Vinci to draw up a portrait. The obliging Leonardo did so. The spiritualists rested content, others did not, and the controversy over Columbus's appearance continued. Today his features are portrayed on the whole harshly, reflecting his poor press; earlier generations presented him as a great personage; over the centuries Columbus resembled Roman senators, fifteenth-century Italianate Christs, seventeenth-century Spanish noblemen, and, later, nineteenth-century Victorian gentlemen.

Columbus's appearance was not the only controversial feature of his saga. The New York spiritualists were only one group in a long line that searched for certainty in a story full of mysteries and found what they sought. As the motives for those searches changed, so did the Columbus image.

An early American chronicler cast Columbus in the image of St. John, the seer of Patmos. A later generation liked him self-assured, iron-willed, bold, and determined, looking like Achilles, with none of the uncertainty, mysticism, and self-doubt that endeared him to mid-nineteenth-century Americans. Later those same qualities led a few to label Columbus mad, while others branded him a genocidal maniac respon-

✪ LILIAN HANDLIN has taught history at the Hebrew University and is the author, with Oscar Handlin, of the four-volume *History of Liberty in America*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sible for the atrocities that followed his arrival in Guanahani, atrocities that inspired the National Council of Churches to declare 1992 a year of prayer and lamentation, and fueled the activities of Harold Pinter's Committee on 500 Years of Resistance. Marlon Brando demanded that his name be removed from the credits of a Columbus movie on grounds that the script was unfair to Indians. The 1992 Columbus also symbolized colonialism, imperialism, phallocentrism, and elitism. He became the archetypal proponent of patriarchy and ecocide, a rapist who destroyed a gentler, nature-friendly, communal, peace-loving, and stateless culture—a cross between a baby-seal poacher and Adolf Eichmann.

The attitude behind these charges was not new. In the past, also, few invokers of Columbus really cared about the factual details of his biography. All were "interpreters"—that is, they applied their imagination to restructure the record.

From 1600 to 1750, Columbus was an irrelevancy to whom no one paid much attention. Even a comprehensive universal calendar published by Samuel Stearns (1783), which began appropriately enough at creation, mentioned Noah and the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the advent of Christ, but it did not see fit to list Columbus as among humanity's more influential figures. In the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the situation changed dramatically. Columbus became first a symbol and then an icon, enjoying a sterling reputation until 1892, even though supporters of alternative discoverers tried unsuccessfully to tear him down.

For more than a century, shared anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish prejudices of seventeenth-century North American colonists slighted Columbus's achievement. Even his warmest admirers gagged over the fact that the enterprise of the Indies was a Spanish undertaking and that he sailed in the service of the forces of darkness, the rack, and the Whore of Babylon. Only some fancy footwork later rescued Columbus from this unholy alliance and thus liberated the discovery of the New World from unworthy associations. Columbus's neglect was also owing to the fact that, however controversial his landfall, it clearly did not occur in the northern part of the continent. By the time of English arrival, the initial discovery was old hat, and its instigator treated accordingly. Those who argued that the northern part of the continent should be named Cabotia, after Sebastian Cabot, certainly felt that way.

The character of the sources also explained Columbus's long absence from popular consciousness. English translations of Spanish and Italian sources aimed to encourage British navigation and conquest and to de-legitimize Spanish claims to the territories. They did not reflect an interest in Columbus. Even Las Casas, who hailed Columbus's achieve-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ments, affected the English-speaking world only because Richard Hakluyt assembled anti-Spanish propaganda. Las Casas was also a hit with the Dutch, who translated portions of his work in 1620 and turned him into an advocate of national independence and religious freedom. Las Casas thus entered American consciousness by way of the Puritans and English sixteenth-century travel literature, and in 1625 Samuel Purchas included him in his collection. None of this encouraged greater attention to Columbus.

Early historical narratives also reflected Columbus's insignificance. Seventeenth-century North American chroniclers ignored him because their version of America's discovery made him irrelevant. The Lord's remembrancers thought that *they,* and not some bigoted Catholics, fulfilled the divine plan. Thought patterns shaped by biblical analogies also encouraged them to ignore earlier forays into the New World. The errand into the wilderness was not a Spanish enterprise; what mattered were the similarities between the Puritans and the children of Israel. Winthrop, aboard the Arabella, drew parallels with Moses, not with Columbus; and so did Edward Johnson, Nathaniel Morton, William Bradford, and others.

The irony of God's choosing a fanatic Catholic, in the service of the Catholic kings, to discover a haven for persecuted Protestants, would be discerned only later. Though important, 1492 was just another historical incident and the uncertain meaning of the discovery in Anglo-American thought further diminished Columbus's importance.

Samuel Sewall, an original in many ways, first bridged the gap between Columbus and the North American continent. He stumbled on the navigator while applying familiar Puritan intellectual constructs to late-seventeenth-century upheavals. In so doing, he reinterpreted Columbus in light of contemporary needs—which has remained his fate ever since.

Sewall plugged into a longstanding tradition in Western thought and linked Columbus to the prophet Daniel, 1492 to the millennium. Very well read, Sewall gathered a battery of authorities to substantiate his reading of Daniel: "and the many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." John Eliot and John Cotton, Joseph Mede and William Twisse, among many others, had already interpreted these phrases in the light of America's discovery. Sewall then reread St. John's revelation to apply to New England's "tearful" decade. This created knotty problems of chronology that Sewall hoped Harvard would untangle. When the college refused, Sewall published two pamphlets detailing his own prophetic calculations. In the latter, the New World was destined to become the seat of the divine metropolis, a by-then antiquated idea. What was new was Sewall's styling of Columbus as the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instrument of the divine will, a figure of mythical proportions, the magnanimous hero, a Genoese manfully appointed by God to be the finder of these lands. Sewall thereby articulated a widening mental horizon, reflecting subtle intellectual changes that marked an emergent colonial outlook.

By 1700, many writers had noted the coincidence between the discovery of the New World and two other events that occurred in 1492 (the Jews' expulsion from Spain and Granada's fall to Ferdinand and Isabella). Sewall, who still examined life within biblical categories and whose consciousness was suffused by the sense of prophetic time, found further proof of this thesis: the Jews' dispersal and the discovery were parts of the same mechanism, ingredients of prophetic fulfillment. To quiet his own fears—the results of political upheavals, imperial uncertainties, Indian depredations, and witchcraft manifestations—Sewall reinterpreted historical events in biblical terms and made Columbus the herald of a new dawn. He thus fused sacred and profane history and reassured himself about the future. In the process, Sewall slightly shifted the accepted boundaries of contemporary thought, as he would in other matters as well.

But this effort to extend the boundaries of perception had no legs. Sewall's influence was limited, and even his good friend Cotton Mather, who had an opinion on everything, remained unimpressed and had little to say about Columbus, as did that other great scholar of America's millennial role, Jonathan Edwards. Mather and Edwards, like others around the turn of the century, remained wedded to a world outlook that fostered Columbus's invisibility. The link with millenarian thought was a dead end for his image.

After 1750, Columbus's fortunes in the American consciousness improved vastly when his story was divorced from the knotty problems of Daniel and Revelation, and when social change generated needs for a heroic image to serve a less cohesive, more secular community uncertain about its future. After 1750, wider fields of vision and broader frames of thought altered the significance of the discovery in European thought. Once that happened, the discoverer himself would not be left far behind.

The great Scottish historian William Robertson was partly responsible for the reformulated view. He provided the basic outline of a narrative that, with many variations, still stands today, including the legend of Isabella's willingness to pawn her jewels to finance the first voyage. Robertson's was the story of the humble youth of respectable but poor parentage who through courage and ambition achieved the impossible. Robertson gave birth to a new image of Columbus, the embodiment of a new spirit of Renaissance curiosity about nature, the spirit of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

willpower, self-control, and rationality. This Columbus—not surprisingly—was an instant hit with America's revolutionary generation.

For in Robertson's often moving prose, Columbus materialized as an Enlightenment ideal, the iconoclast, the scientific geographer, a hero fit for the American pantheon. On a more subtle level, the new Columbus incarnated the Scottish Enlightenment's ideal of manhood, a high recommendation for Americans about to be raised on commonsense philosophy. This was the Columbus inspired by heaven "with a sagacity and fortitude more than human, in order to accomplish a design so far beyond the ideas and conception of all former ages." The navigator embodied humanity's triumphant overcoming of its own shortcomings and history. He vanquished false knowledge, proud intellectuals, impractical sophists, and antiquated clerics. For a generation about to embark on the construction of a new world order, Robertson's creation became an archetypal figure. "All that had hitherto been deemed great or splendid, faded away. Vast new objects now presented themselves. The human mind . . . engaged with ardor in the pursuit of them." This was the revolution Robertson's Columbus wrought in European thought.

Many American patriots took to this Columbus and recast the events of 1492 in a new light. The promise of 1492, they decided, was fulfilled in 1776. The impoverished sailor's treatment by European monarchs became a morality tale, akin to the story of America's fortunes in the hands of haughty Britain. Columbus's lowly origins became an asset. Detestation of the Old World, one facet of revolutionary ideology, also augmented Columbus's significance, turning him into a symbol of European victimization. Robertson's frame of reference gave Columbus great visibility. In the grand parades that were an important feature of civic culture in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, at the head of the procession, before the floats and trade representatives and the feminine figures dressed up as Columbia or Miss Liberty, usually there marched a character impersonating Columbus. In popular perception, his European background vanished; Columbus had become the first American.

The revolutionary Columbus also became a stand-in for the American Adam in Eden again, facing a bright future and presumably no Fall. Ever since the sixteenth century, the effort to assimilate the discovery of the New World occasioned the utopianization of what Columbus found, an intellectual construct useful to Americans embarking on untried experiments. The parallel was clear between Columbus's landing on an isolated shore, uncertain of what would follow, and the colonists-turned-citizens inaugurating momentous beginnings. The rich imagery associated with these thought processes fused classical and Christian elements, turning Columbus also into a symbol of the second chance and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the republican ethos. Americans who cast themselves in a new light after 1763 reshaped Columbus as well.

The process by which the Columbus image evolved in late-eighteenth-century America began with Alexander Martin's 1769 poem *America,* which presented the genius of New Albion guiding Columbus across the ocean. Martin here drew on English literary conventions, but he also created a mythical link among Great Britain, the colonies, North America, and Columbus that had no historical basis but was necessary to Anglo-Saxonize the mariner. Martin thus disposed of the Spanish and Italian backgrounds. A political figure and amateur playwright, he also peppered his poem with references to Jove and Minerva rather than to Christ and Daniel, inaugurating yet another feature of the Columbus image—its neoclassical facade. Another poem of the period, attributed sometimes to William Livingston—entitled *Rusticus*—originated yet another convention in recalling the spirit of Columbus from the grave. From then on until Walt Whitman, the poor spirit had little rest, resurrected periodically to pontificate on contemporary issues.

Because of Martin, *Rusticus,* and Robertson, the revolutionary Columbus often resembled Greek and Roman heroes with a Christian veneer. No one dressed him in a toga. But in spirit, outlook, and values, Columbus reigned as Aeneas. Since American thought, by 1776, was shaped by classical imagery, mythology, and history, the Columbus persona was enriched by both secular and Christian elements. This persona then shouldered the burdens of Christian promise and a pagan past, becoming a serviceable symbol for an era out to have the best of both worlds.

Ezra Stiles, Joel Barlow, Philip Freneau, Jeremiah Belknap, and Timothy Dwight were among the more prominent writers who transformed Columbus into a universal Christian incarnating Roman civic virtues. Despite subtle differences among their Columbuses, all answered positively the question posed in 1792 by the Abbé Raynal: Was the discovery of America useful or harmful to mankind? Four French essayists answered in the negative. Barlow, Belknap, and Freneau thought otherwise. None were interested in Columbus, who served simply as a foil for other issues. The navigator was well on his way to being all things to all men.

To Ezra Stiles, Columbus was one of mankind's benefactors because the discovery facilitated the foundation of a society patterned after James Harrington's *Oceana* where liberty and an equitable distribution of property answered human needs. Stiles drew upon Daniel as Sewall did, this time to universalize the revolution's achievements. Barlow's and Freneau's Columbus sometimes resembled Goethe's Faust, a tortured soul tallying up the horrors that followed 1492. Both writers posited 1776

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as the answer to that horrendous failure. The more cautious Timothy Dwight, not entirely persuaded that the American experiment was a total success, hedged his bets. All comforted the ghostly sufferer by dwelling on the glories of America's future.

Freneau also fixed on a theme that later enchanted Emerson and Whitman: Columbus on his deathbed, embarking on the most mysterious voyage of them all. But Freneau, too, promptly lost sight of Columbus. The more pessimistic Dwight had Columbus facing a less rosy future than the one described by his compatriots. The 1790s seemed to belie original revolutionary expectations; the problems of mankind's moral growth, virtue, and rectitude remained unresolved, and hence Dwight inclined more to jeremiads than the others.

The popularity of the navigator among the literati did not seep deeply into popular consciousness, notwithstanding parades, naming ceremonies, and a few celebrations in 1792. Freneau and Barlow appended long footnotes summarizing Robertson, correctly assuming that their readers were unfamiliar with Columbus's biography. The navigator also made little headway in the graphic arts, where America's image derived not from him but from the Indian princess. The young woman was often surrounded by badges of liberty and classical motifs, but Columbus was conspicuously absent.

When that princess was renamed Columbia, her fame was also transitory. Brother Jonathan and Uncle Sam, virile symbols of the new continent, soon took her place. When the United States selected its iconography, other symbols seemed more evocative than the Columbus enterprise. At least three generations and huge changes occurred before the *Santa Maria* acquired a status equal to that of the *Mayflower*.

Some Americans, aware of the injustice done to Columbus, made snide remarks about Vespucci's skillful public relations. Benjamin Rush recalled Raynal's comment that the injustice to Columbus presaged the New World as the theater of future depredations. But all the naming controversies then and later failed to offer Columbus redress. As the revolutionary heroes and statesmen became transformed into the Founding Fathers and Mothers, they too overshadowed Columbus. Americans were in 1800 too future oriented to grant him space in their pantheons. They also remained intensely local-minded and turned to their own not-so-distant past—to the Pilgrims, Plymouth Rock, and the Declaration of Independence—for their days of coming together.

Most magazines ignored it. Thanksgiving proclamations in 1792 gave thanks for everything but the discovery, while toasts at elegant dinners did not go very far. A controversial Baltimore statue, set up in Columbus's honor, was rumored to commemorate the donor's horse. The *Concord Herald* noted the event only by debating whether some Indian

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tribes descended from the Welshmen Madoc left behind. Other newspapers dealt with affairs in Europe, a fifteen-pound beet raised in Vermont, and foot binding for Chinese men, but they never mentioned Columbus. October 12, 1492, was celebrated in 1792 sparsely and only among very select groups.

Not much changed until Washington Irving, at the instigation of Alexander Everett, looked at Navarrete. Navarrete, commissioned by the Spanish government to comb local archives for hitherto unpublished Columbus memorabilia, generated for the first time since the sixteenth century a wealth of new information. But, instead of translating dry and boring documents, as Everett had proposed, Irving penned a biography, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*—an instant hit among critics and readers and a huge financial success. Irving's was the first full-scale modern biography in any language and a narrative masterpiece. He accomplished for Columbus what Robertson had earlier—liberated him from the shackles of previous generations. The factual mistakes, myths, and legends that Irving embroidered or generated mattered less than the image of Columbus that became dominant until the end of the century. No debunkers, and they were legion, succeeded in toppling the edifice Irving had constructed.

The new Columbus was still the revolutionary primeval Adam cum classical hero, but with a romantic halo, as much a child of Irving's century as Robertson's portrait was of his. Irving's book was really a novel, its hero a fifteenth-century mariner with a nineteenth-century Werther-like soul. Irving's Columbus fell midway between Barlow's generation and Moby Dick, since this Columbus had more in common with Ahab than with the Renaissance. The voyage of discovery, once the suitable opening for an epic celebration of America, became instead an archetypal American tragedy. Irving's Columbus was a man obsessed with a mission and an illusion, with 1492 his greatest triumph but also his greatest failure. Columbus's life was a quest for the unattainable, which eventually drove him mad. Here was the man of vows and penance who fasted in monkish garb, and who arrived, courtesy of Irving's brilliant imagination, in an enchanted new land where nature contrived the ordeal of innocence.

For Americans fascinated by Walter Scott and a fortunately irrelevant medieval past, Irving's Columbus proved immensely absorbing. The book provided a welcome relief to those fed a starched and future-oriented diet. The medieval-minded mystic whose sailings were to liberate Jerusalem proved more attractive than Columbus the First of the Moderns. A mixture of literary and historical conventions created a rich narrative, which focused on Columbus's crusade as an atonement for the destruction of the second Eden.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Relying on Las Casas, Irving blasted Spanish colonialism and stoked already widespread American prejudices. But he also separated Columbus from what followed, when his discovery was portrayed as an invasion, the snake's arrival in paradise. "The dream of natural liberty, of ignorant contentment and loitering idleness was as yet unbroken. But the fiat had gone forth, the white man had penetrated into the land; avarice, pride and ambition and pining care and sordid labor were soon to follow. The indolent paradise of the Indians was to disappear forever."

Irving did not originate this imagery, but merely drew on the results of the immense eighteenth-century debate, from both sides of the Atlantic, on the meaning of America. But Irving's influence lasted for the next half century. Irving's Columbus became the subject of poems, articles, sermons, simplifications, children's versions, plays, and stories. He helped fuel another debate over the continent's name—with Alleghenia, the Republic of Washington, Fredonia, Yankeedom, Saxendom, and Columbia vying for first place. Once more Columbus lost out, which did not surprise Irving's audience. Lydia Sigourney, among many poets, put Irving's persona into verse, describing a life of one missed opportunity after another. In the intervening years, various Americans put Columbus to their own uses, while advocates of alternative discoverers lobbied for their heroes. In popular consciousness, however, Irving's creation reigned supreme.

All this changed in 1892 when the United States marked the four-hundredth anniversary of the sailing with a gigantic celebration nominally focused on the mariner. The occasion generated a flood of activities, exemplifying the variety of tasks Columbus's pliable persona served. Many distinct groups exploited the navigator, the most successful being that of the Italo-Americans who claimed him as their own. They thereby rescued him once and for all from Spanish clutches. The Irish-Americans fastened upon his Catholicism, delighted to have a non-Puritan hero of their own, and one who got here first. In some circles the *Santa Maria* became as famous as the *Mayflower*. The uniform Columbus persona shattered into many pieces, a reflection in part of the nation's ethnic diversity. Because 1892 also celebrated American pluralism, a multi-faceted Columbus was acceptable to all.

The Metropolitan Museum of New York commissioned a painting of the moment when, the queen having pawned her jewels, the contract between Columbus and the crown was about to be signed. The painting was symptomatic of renewed interest in Isabella. Counties, towns, and organizations were named that year after the woman credited with facilitating Columbus's endeavor. Although Herbert Baxter Adams main-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tained that "not jewels, but Jews, were the real financial basis of the first expedition," few listened. Isabella, the patron saint of Columbus, long a sub-icon in the 1492 saga, came into her own. A Utica lecturer made her beautiful and gracious, politically astute and clever, but also a loving wife and mother—an embodiment of the ideal of American womanhood. Other speakers pointed out that feminine loyalty, compassion, and inflexible willpower facilitated the discovery of the New World.

Politically inclined feminist circles fastened upon Isabella's savvy, while the socially prominent lady managers of the Women's Pavillion at the Chicago exposition suggested that no matter how great Columbus was, "it required the aid of an Isabella to transform his dreams into realities." Chauncey M. Depew agreed and traced the advanced standing of America's women directly to Isabella's "generous foresight." Columbus's achievement, he said, enabled them to say to men, "You owe America to me." Children marching in one of New York's giant parades carried banners with Isabella's picture. Columbus became a subsidiary figure, the tool of one woman who came into her own.

But what Columbus lost at their hands he more than gained from the Catholics. In the past, Columbus's Catholicism was frequently mentioned in muted tones, with James Russell Lowell, for example, implying in a poem that Columbus's strength and determination were part of his inner being, separate from his religion. Italian and Irish immigrants would have none of this. For them, Columbus's Catholicism was a major asset, and they made a virtue out of what had earlier been a potential drawback. In the hands of the Knights of Columbus, Columbus was the first American knight, his crew was "that valiant band," and the landing at Guanahani with Catholic rituals was the forerunner of the United States. "The unequalled grandeur of our civil structure today tells the manifest response to those prayers of 400 years ago." This was not far removed from the tone of Barlow and Freneau, who also had Columbus praying for a heaven for civil liberty, democracy, and republicanism. What was new was Columbus as an icon of ethnic identity, the *Santa Maria* as a symbol of Catholic legitimacy.

Some reformed Jews disagreed. A few emphasized Columbus's supposedly Jewish origins, but to most, his religion was secondary. More important was Columbus, the embodiment of an all-inclusive Americanism, sheltering among others the likes of them. Luis de Torres, forgiven his conversion, became the first Jew to walk the New World. A Temple Emmanuel rabbi said that ever since 1492 Jews could cease longing for a return to Palestine, and Jerusalem did not need to be rebuilt. Their promised land was America. His counterpart at Temple Ahavat Chessed suggested that Columbus was actually on a mission to find a haven for persecuted co-religionists. The more masochistically inclined Jews

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

repeated the Adams contention that the first sailing was financed by confiscated Jewish property. The Italians, it was said, gave him birth. The Spaniards supported the voyage. The Anglo-Saxons fulfilled the mission. And the Jews, according to cynics, paid for it.

A contemporary composer summed up the spirit of the hour in the chorus, "The Triumph of Columbus," performed at Carnegie Hall. "This is an American night, an American week, an American month, an American year." The mosaic that was American society at the turn of the century needed a Columbus who had gone ethnic.

One Columbus, however, had not gone ethnic that year—the scholar's Columbus. By 1892, American historiography had rebelled against the Bancrofts, Prescotts, and Irvings. A few brave souls exploited the opportunity to refashion Columbus in accord with new scholarly rules, freeing the true persona from the mythologizers' cocoon. Others, appalled by the wholesale adulation, decided to give the reading public the blunt truth, unwilling to separate Columbus from what they deemed the greatest atrocity the world had ever seen. The extent of that atrocity, however controversial the figures, had been known since 1600, but previous Americans had somehow detached Columbus from what followed.

Edward Everett Hale, author and clergyman, sparked the debate by hailing the America of 1492 as a blank page, and Columbus who

> Left blood and woe and tyranny behind
> Sailing still west, that land newborn to find.
> For all mankind the unstained page unfurled,
> Where God might write anew the story of the world.

Hale talked of the blank paper America offered humanity, courtesy of Columbus, a chance to work out Christ's lessons on democracy. And he reprinted the poem, "Give Me White Paper," whenever his articles and speeches appeared—a masterful example of intellectual recycling.

Charles Francis Adams, Jr., heard one of Hale's addresses and had a fit. When he rose to address the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1892, he vented his fury and refused to class Columbus among humanity's benefactors. What an earlier generation hailed as fortitude, courage, and boldness was for Adams "a stubbornness which did no credit to his judgment." As for Irving, said Adams, "the vein of platitudinous moralizing which runs through the book makes it difficult for a writer of the present day to take it seriously." One speaker in the book declared that "individual intelligence and independent conscience found in the New World a haven and a refuge. They were passengers upon the caravels of Columbus, and he was unconsciously making for the port of civil and religious liberty." To that, all that could be said was—hogwash.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Adams scanned the three ships' passenger lists and found none of the above. "Never, in the whole history of buccaneering, did any black visaged gang of ruffians, swarming over a vessel's side, indulge in such atrocities, in such general plunder, murder and cruelty as that stately band bearing the cross before them, potentially issued from the *Santa Maria* with Columbus at their head, on October 21, 1492. They looted two continents." The idea that Columbus providentially compensated Catholics for Protestant defections meant, said Adams, that God sanctioned religious bigotry and political oppression. The United States, he concluded, successfully reversed everything Columbus represented, and it was her mission to extirpate the Columbian legacy.

In 1892, Adams was not alone in insisting that 1492 was one of mankind's greatest misfortunes. In at least one symposium, blacks and Indians weighted the discovery from their particular vantage and found much wanting. But the crown of iconoclasts belonged to Adams's friend Justin Winsor, whose brilliant biography was intended to demythologize and attracted the most vituperative response. Winsor's Columbus was not quite the genocidal maniac of later days, but he came close. Winsor's effect on public consciousness, not surprisingly, was nil.

French efforts to make Columbus a Catholic saint, and America's adulation of a man he thought unworthy of the honor, aroused Winsor's ire. Winsor recognized that a nation needed heroes, but his Columbus was a self-serving egotistical manipulator, single-mindedly driven to make the Indies a paying investment—not what the United States ought to commemorate.

Winsor's Columbus failed on all counts, being a deceitful, canting hypocrite who took the Lord's name in vain to practice enormous cruelties. "No child of any age ever did less to improve his contemporaries and few ever did more to prepare the way for such improvements. There is no more conspicuous example in history of a man showing the path and losing it." "The mines which Columbus went to seek were hard to find, the people he went to save for Christ were easy to exterminate." He sent home "vessels laden with reeking cargoes of flesh," as befitted a power-hungry, greedy haggler in the marketplace. "His discovery was a blunder, his blunder was a new world, the new world is his monument. Its discoverer might have been its father, he proved to be its despoiler." This Columbus was a throwback to the Inquisition and the auto-da-fé, subject to hallucinations excusable only under the plea of insanity.

Columbus's detractors were delighted, puny lot though they were, including the slightly more numerous supporters of prior discovery claims. But for every favorable review, Winsor encountered dozens of hostile ones, charging him in effect with slaughtering a sacred cow. This was the status finally accorded Columbus four hundred years after his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

voyage. He came to symbolize the New World, in the popular image synonymous with the United States. "To paint the discoverer in the darkest colors is accounted nowadays as evidence of scholarship," sniffed one critic, but this was as bad as Irving's fancies and less pleasant to read. Another one spoke of those "modern writers incapable of entering into the mood of a time so remote from their own, who peck and carp at details wherein Columbus seems to offend their precious ideas of propriety." Winsor was chided for writing like a New England Sunday schoolmarm, his book "a monument of laborious stupidity . . . silly, authored by a driveler."

Some historians came to Columbus's defense. He may indeed have started his life as a pirate and sea rover, but so did English sea dogs and the Vikings. His calculations may have been all wrong, but what an achievement. History often moved forward, courtesy of grand mistakes with unforeseen consequences. Columbus also may have been a kidnapper and slave trader, but so was Prince Henry the Navigator who supported his naval college at Sagres by the slave trade. Columbus wanted gold, but only to satisfy his sovereign's greed. And if he was occasionally cruel, those in authority often were. A Baptist minister blasted "the art of disparagement and disdain" and found Winsor's facts as shaky as his judgment. And another reader fumed at "that spirit of critical inquiry which doubts everything, that modern spirit which destroys all illusions and all heroes." He need not have worried.

For better or worse, the Winsors and Adamses had little effect on public consciousness. Columbus survived as the focal point of feverish celebrations, symbol of the willingness to take risks and dare the impossible. The last decade of the nineteenth century was as troubled as its counterparts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and beneath the surface, a sense of unease afflicted the more articulate. Others shared their forebodings.

In 1892 above hundreds of little Columbuses, each slightly different, there loomed the giant reaffirming the powers of the human spirit. The reaffirmation was badly needed, said an influential editor, at a moment when "a debasing utilitarianism imprisoning the soul blighted the nation, when we consume our forests in a generation and hasten to despoil every tract of virgin soil, making a desert, while our cry 'after us the deluge' is naturally followed by the dismal wail of an aggressive pessimism." The popular Columbus persona provided the antidote.

That Columbus was made to quote Aeneas: "Let us then, comrades, press forward. It is not too late to seek another world." And one of the most successful poems of the day, which visualized the flag over the Capitol Dome as the Ultima Thule of the the lights that Columbus spiedfrom his deck, encapsulated that spirit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Behind him lay the gray Azores
Behind the Gates of Hercules
The good mate said, now we must pray,
For lo, the very stars are gone.
Speak, admiral, what shall I say?
Why, say, sail on, sail on, sail on.

Irving's Columbus lived into the twentieth century, starring in several major biographies that incorporated new information while recasting the mariner's image in contemporary terms. By 1906, Columbus still remained a fit hero for America, "his deeds shine with lustre undimmed." Six years later, Charles H. McCarthy echoed the sentiment, "Columbus's fame is secure and will flame forever in the firmament of time." The century's greatest Columbus scholar—Samuel Eliot Morison—agreed. "Now, more than 500 years after his birth . . . his fame and reputation may be considered secure for all time." Morison was wrong, as historians moonlighting in prophecy often are. By the second half of the century, many factors radically transformed Columbus's positive image.

Winsor's Columbus also survived, indeed thrived, in the next century, along lines laid down by Charles Francis Adams, Jr., who said that it would have been better had Columbus drowned on his first westward voyage, leaving the discovery to the French or the English. The twentieth century transformed this anti-Spanish bias into a virulent anti-Europeanism. Holocausts, whether French, English, or Spanish, carried out under Catholic or Protestant auspices, were much alike. It mattered little what the oppressors' imperial language was. By the 1930s American Marxists, arguing that life would have been simpler had America never been discovered, revived the old indictment of the New World as Satan's dominion, later making the United States his embodiment.

By the twentieth century, the utopianization of pre-Columbian cultures had had a long history. In 1774 Freneau spoke for generations of thinkers earlier and later when he said:

The nation at the ocean's edge
No longer destined to be free
Shall owe distress and death to thee.
Seats of innocence and love
Shall soon the scenes of horror prove.

The idea gained further currency when a capitalist, industrialized, and supposedly class-ridden society was juxtaposed with the presumably humane, egalitarian, and communal world of the Indians. Columbus, once proudly identified as the first of the moderns, became the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ultimate criminal, the harbinger of all of modernity's ills, spreading European blight to previously uncontaminated areas.

Expanding knowledge of indigenous cultures and changing ethnographic and anthropological conceptions drastically altered the picture of pre-Columbian America. Negative evaluations of European civilization then shadowed Columbus as well. Historical efforts to reconstruct the past from the victims' point of view enhanced the perception of Columbus as the great destroyer. The revival of the once-discredited notion of the historian as a hanging judge enabled academics, uninfluential in their own society, to compensate themselves by realigning the features of the past. The uses of history for therapeutic purposes and the emphasis on trends rather than on individuals also downgraded Columbus's achievements. He became the ultimate dead white European male—none ever as deadly in the annals of humankind. As mathematicians, semioticians, archaeologists, geographers, computer experts, physicians, deconstructionists, and historians joined in the acrimonious debate over the extent of the post-1492 tragedy, Columbus's features blurred further. Cultural warfare in the 1980s in the end claimed him as one of its greatest victims.

The result, in 1992, was a shadowy Columbus buried under an irrelevant debate. Made to resemble a blood-dripping George Washington, he was battered in the name of values ironically stemming from Europe, with slogans hatched in Paris, London, and New York more often than in Mexico City or Bogota. More popular books, articles, exhibitions, and symposia in the United States dwelled on post-1492 than on the mariner himself. No one dared fully celebrate his sailing, at a time when control of the past was an item on the political agenda. Some feared offending ethnic sensibilities, others deemed mourning more appropriate. In Philadelphia efforts to rename Delaware Street as Christopher Columbus Boulevard became an emblem of racial insensitivity, for which numerous consciousness-raising university conferences hoped to atone. Cautious types took refuge in talks about encounters, colliding worlds, cultural exchanges, and reunifications. The more outspoken marched forth furiously under the banners of Edward Said, Franz Fannon, and Ali Mazrui to deconstruct the victors' mythologies, creating new ones en route.

One hundred years ago an anonymous observer suggested that "it does not pay to discover new worlds, it only tempts critics to discover disagreeable things about the discoverer. The reward is poverty and chains . . . and after four hundred years, a flood of critical obloquy." It's been ever thus.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Note of Thanks

WYATT PRUNTY

Wallet stolen, so we must end our stay.
Then, while checking out, the wallet reappears
With an unsigned note saying, "Please forgive me;
This is an illness I have fought for years,
And for which you've suffered innocently.
P.S. I hope you haven't phoned about the cards."
I wave the wallet so my wife will see.
Smiling, she hangs up, and smiling she regards
The broad array of others passing by,
Each now special and uniquely understood.
We go back to our unmade room and laugh,
Happily agreeing that the names for "good"
Are not quite adequate and that each combines
Superlatives we but rarely think.
For the next three nights we drink a better wine.
And everyday we go back through to check
The shops, buying what before had cost too much,
As if now Christmas and birthdays were planned
Years in advance. We watch others and are touched
To see how their faces are a dead-panned
Generality, holding close
The wishes and desires by which we all are gripped.
All charities seem practical to us,
All waiters deserving of a bigger tip.
And, though we counter such an urge,
We start to think we'd like to meet the thief,
To shake the hand of self-reforming courage
That somehow censored a former disbelief.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then we are home and leafing through the bills
Sent us from an unknown world of pleasure;
One of us likes cheap perfume; the other thrills
Over shoes, fedoras, expensive dinners;
There are massage parlors and videos,
Magazines, sunglasses, pharmaceuticals,
Long-distance calls, a host of curios,
Gallons of booze. . . . Only now we make our call.
But then, on hold, we go on sifting through
The mail till turning up a postcard view
Of our hotel. Flipping it and drawing blanks,
We read, "So much enjoyed my stay with you
I thought I ought to jot a note of thanks."

L WYATT PRUNTY, director of the Sewanee Writer's Conference, is the author of *Fallen from the Symboled World*, a study of contemporary poetry. His latest collection of poetry, *The Run of the House*, will be published by Johns Hopkins University Press in April 1993.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PORTRAIT

Luncheon for Somerset Maugham

PAUL HORGAN

In the early summertime of 1941, on vacation from my school job in New Mexico, I came to New York to recharge my cultural batteries. On my arrival I began to make a number of appointments by telephone, to make the best use of my limited time. Among the first I called was Daniel Longwell, the editor of *Life* magazine. I had met him through Peter Hurd, whose paintings of the Southwest he featured in the magazine, and I now hoped to see Dan and Mary Longwell on my own account. He was one of the most dynamic, knowledgeable, and engaging men I ever knew, and Mary, his wife, who was a staff editor of *Time*, complemented his brilliant energy with her quieter but no less appealing style.

"Just arrived?" he said in his staccato manner. "Lucky you called, delighted, have you come to lunch today, Somerset Maugham coming, other interesting people, love to have you, Mary will be pleased."

"Yes, thank you, yes," I said.

"Good. Look for you. One-thirty, River Club. Great. Come a little early. Talk. See you."

Such instant hospitality was like him. He knew that meeting Maugham would interest me as a younger writer. Moreover, I enjoyed thinking how I would return home with a report of this meeting for a neighbor of mine across the park who was an intrepid lion huntress. She collected shamelessly. One of her assaults was directed at Maugham, to whom she wrote asking for his autograph. There was no reply. She wrote again, and again, referring each time to her earlier requests. At last came this: "Dear Madam, oh, very well, here it is, W. Somerset Maugham." The weary tartness of this accorded well with the likeness I had formed of him from other anecdotes and countless passages in his plays, stories, novels, and essays. *Of Human Bondage* I had first seen at the age of twelve among books that my parents were reading. I did not read it until much later as a schoolboy, but then I came to know Philip Carey well, with his self-shaming limp, his rancid passion for Mildred, the lowborn waitress, and his fatalism, which was shocking to my Catholic confidence. I followed his books quite regularly. It was possible to enjoy equally those that were of literary merit and those that went evenly along as magazine entertainment. By 1941 he was, of course, a world figure and surely one of the richest living authors. He had lately been in the news because of the story of his hair-raising escape from his villa at Cap Ferrat just before the Nazi invasion overwhelmed France in 1940.

Some weeks before my New York vacation, I had read in the *Saturday Evening Post* Maugham's four-part serial account of the sacrifices, privations, endurances, and danger of his dash for freedom before the Nazi horde and the spineless collapse of the French government. It was a grim story, told evenly, yet spiced with anecdote and lighted by a power of will and courage that seemed surprising in one so famous for his fastidiousness, esoteric taste, and sybaritic style. The conditions he had to meet and survive were all too true of what happened to civilized life in the conquering drive of the German barbarians. Sup-

✪ PAUL HORGAN, professor emeritus of English at Wesleyan University, is the author of many books, two of which have won the Pulitzer Prize for history: *The Rio Grande in North American History* and *Lamy of Santa Fe: His Life and Times*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plies were suddenly scarce—Maugham had to shop as a hoarder. His house was insecure—he had to take refuge on the old fishing boat that served as his yacht and sail up obscure estuaries in hiding. But soon enough it was clear that he must leave France. He must find passage to England. This was arranged on a coaling ship that would sail from Cannes to Liverpool by way of Portugal and Algiers—a very much fraught journey of more than two weeks in waters infested by enemy submarines. It would be interesting now to meet not only Maugham the celebrated writer but also Maugham the survivor, who could be the emblem of what the Hitler war could portend for us in the United States if we should be drawn into it.

There were those among us who would loudly choose the appeaser's peace in order to stay out of the war; there were others, no less eloquent, who thought our best chance of avoiding the conflict would come through our giving aid to Britain which could then serve as our shield. I was a strong interventionist. Through the prospect of meeting Mr. Maugham, the war suddenly seemed personal. I hoped he would tell us all about it. I wondered how it was that Daniel Longwell knew Mr. Maugham, and whether (here I was reminded of Mr. Maugham's occasionally rebellious way with pronouns) he was inviting him to write war articles for *Life*, which he could do so effectively, and if so, whether he had already asked him, or was about to ask him today, once an excellent luncheon had put him in a grateful mood so that he could not but accept his invitation.

II

I came "a little early" to the River Club in East Fifty-second Street where I was shown into a large, airy, paneled room closely overlooking the East River. Dan Longwell came forward—seemed to spring forward in his hearty energy—to welcome me with a few staccato words. I had heard that the top executives of Time Inc. all spoke in somewhat the same manner, loyally echoing the speech of Henry Luce, the founder and presiding genius of the firm. In contrast, Mary Longwell, soft-voiced in a horn-like tone, gravely gentle in manner, spoke from a fine mind in repose. Dan now led me to meet four other guests who also had come a little early.

They were William Allen White and his wife, from Emporia, Kansas; their daughter-in-law, Mrs. William L. White, whose husband was overseas as a correspondent; and Dr. Foster Kennedy, a British psychiatrist. We all made our manners at each other and settled in for light conversation. Reflections off the river wavered across the high ceiling of the handsome room. The long windows were open. River airs stirred the curtains. Occasional shipping on the river—tugs and barges, pleasure boats, an oil tanker—animated the candid summer day.

Mr. White seemed to have an equally candid air. He was a rotund gentleman, pink-faced, white-haired, who beamed with an open countenance upon the world. I think I remember blue eyes and an alert smile. I had never seen him before, but his fame as editor of the Emporia *Gazette* was national, and his championship of Great Britain's heroic stand against Hitler drew millions of supporters. He was easily loquacious in his high prairie voice, with its underlie of good humor and wit. His wife was a comfortable, mid-American lady who could smile inwardly over her husband's great, self-earned position as a leading voice of national opinion. With Dr. Kennedy they exchanged views of Britain's acts of survival under Nazi bombs. Dr. Kennedy was elegance personified—tailoring, trimness of figure, leanness of face under flat, shining hair. His idlest remark was framed with precision.

I thanked Dan for his invitation and noted my interest in Mr. Maugham. How long had he known him?

"Years ago I was his editor for a while at Doubleday's. I've only seen him once or twice before—remote, you know. Mixed feelings. But interesting. Escaped France ahead of the Nazis. Now here in the U.S."

"Yes, I know."

"What are you writing?"

Before I could answer, Dan's small-eyed glance across my shoulder was a signal. He saw his last guest halted in the doorway, and he went rapidly forward to greet him. Dan suddenly was a courtier, unbending slightly, showing a deference that the editor of *Life* was more accustomed to receive than to give. He shook hands with Mr. Maugham and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brought him into the company. Making the introductions, Dan seemed a trifle off his form. I thought I understood why. The presence of W. Somerset Maugham was, amazingly, powerful for so small a man. He was narrow shouldered, carrying one shoulder higher than the other, slim, almost apologetic in bearing as though to state shyness. He was quietly tailored in a close-fitting double-breasted dark suit. His necktie was subdued. He held his hands against his waist. His face was pale, with deep wrinkles coursing down beside his wide mouth, which was permanently turned down. His eyes were startling—large black pupils unwavering under pouched lids, upper and lower. His fixed gaze seemed to enter, diagnose, and judge person or object, all without emotion. If his manner was diffident, still, his effect was subduing. Weariness underlay a polite air. If he smiled, he dropped his lower lip slightly, revealing small teeth distinctly separated. His thin, dark hair was brushed straight flat backward above his high white forehead and seemed to draw his dark eyebrows up in angles of discomfort, as though from a chronic headache. To meet Dan's introductions, he came forward with short, fastidious steps. I had expected him to limp, but then remembered that where Philip Carey limped, Maugham stuttered.

". . . Mr. and Mrs. William Allen White. Mr. White is chairman of our Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies—editor of the nationally esteemed Emporia *Gazette*."

Mr. Maugham had a brief, silent struggle with this information, which was plainly new to him, but he recovered to imitate courteous awareness and approval. "Mm: y-yes, of c-course," he said. He did not shake hands, but only pressed fingertips.

". . . Mrs. William *L.* White, daughter-in-law. . . ."

A brief body inclination.

"Dr. Foster Kennedy, your countryman, I believe. . . ."

Dr. Kennedy inserted his monocle on being introduced; Mr. Maugham let his dangle on its thread. It was the first time I had been in the presence of two monocles.

Turning to me, Dan, whether playful or nervous I never knew, said, "And this is Paul Horgan, the leading novelist of Roswell, New Mexico. . . ."

I had by then published ten books, some of them in England. The town where I lived, about thirty thousand in population, domiciled no other novelists, so far as I knew. But any consideration whatever of my credentials threatened to exhaust Mr. Maugham. He fixed upon me his dark, plum-like gaze and again murmured, "Y-yes, of c-course," and turned to sit down in a huge armchair facing the river.

While Dan and Mary kept the conversation afloat with trivia of the day, Mr. Maugham sat bolt upright with his knees smartly crossed and looked from one to the other of us as we chattered, and though he had nothing to say, he seemed to be the presiding presence of the party. His small frame contained so much reserve of experience, opinion, and fame that a silent expression of these was all that was required of him. There was no hint of rudeness in this detachment—only a stated position, laid over the air of bitter weariness that was so deeply marked in his face.

In an effort to meld him into the idle conversation, Dan asked him about his trans-Atlantic flight on the Pan American Clipper from Lisbon of some months ago: did he enjoy flying? He replied that he had never flown until a few months before, and only then because he had volunteered to give safe conduct to official dispatches that had to be spirited out of France to England. Flying, he said, had always seemed "an un-n-necessary risk." But after all, what were risks for in wartime? he seemed to say.

"Do you like to fly?" I asked Dan, whose coverage of the weekly world required much air travel.

"No, no, not at all. Keep thinking Newton was right, Newton was right."

General laughter, to which Mr. Maugham wryly contributed a smiling downturn of his grape-colored lips.

III

In the authority of his polite reticence Mr. Maugham made all attempts at conversation by the rest of us seem false and diffuse. It was lucky when luncheon was announced. Dan and Mary led us to an adjoining private dining room where the River Club's famous knack for elegance was fully demonstrated. Plenty of flowers, ranks of sparkling glasses, a comfortable armchair for each place, and a cadre of waiters waiting like footmen. As we sat down,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dan gave his quiet rippling laugh as a prelude to an announcement.

"I am going to give you the philosophy of our first course," he said, "terrapin in sherry. Quite a culinary comedy-comedy. You see . . . ."

And he went on to say that there was only one place in North America where the choicest terrapin were to be found—a certain cave on the coast of North Carolina, where terrapin abounded, "almost secretly." Took particular skill to gather them. Before dawn, actually. Terrapin were not stupid, elusive, clever in fact; touch and go. Finally caught and brought out. Pack 'em in ice. Off to the airport. Fact is, the ones we were going to have had been caught that morning, had been flown to New York, just now popped into the boiling water, only matter of hours since the catch before dawn.

As he finished his history, waiters served the terrapin in sherry in large soup dishes. Mr. Maugham and Dr. Kennedy examined the terrapin through their monocles. The heavy soup spoons began to ladle. I feigned joy but the famous dish repelled me, in what seemed to me a revolting mix of reptile and fish; and I watched Mr. Maugham as he took his spoonfuls in a steady rhythm. I couldn't say why, but something about this absorbing of nourishment in order to continue the course of a disappointed life seemed full of pathos, and a parable of human life at large. I cast back to what I had read in the *Saturday Evening Post*—his account of his precarious escape from France just ahead of the Nazi obliteration of all that France meant to him. How, in the stoical frailty of his presence as I saw him, could he have withstood so well the risks and hardships of his flight?

Once bound for England on board the overloaded collier, he took his share of duties, shelling peas and peeling potatoes amidst the ship's grimy layers of coal dust. He thought ruefully of his house as he had left it—"no flowers in the living room." He had gone through the rooms to say good-bye to his bookshelves; to take a last look at his Gauguin painting on glass that he had bought off a native in Tahiti; to pick up to take along a typed transcript of holograph entries of what later became *A Writer's Notebook* and to destroy the original pages; to choose for reading on his voyage Plato's *Trial and Death of Socrates,* Thackeray's *Henry Esmond,* and *Villette* by Charlotte Brontë. It was his habit always to start his morning with "serious reading" and later, on board, the trial and death of Socrates assumed extra significance. On a coastal collier built for a crew of only thirty-eight, there were five hundred others like him trying to escape. There were lifeboats enough only to take on the number of the crew. What, he wondered, what to do if one were cast into the sea—the Mediterranean could be stormy, there were enemy submarines about. He asked a doctor on board. "Don't struggle," said the doctor. "Open your mouth and the water pouring into your throat will bring unconsciousness in less than a minute." But rather than drown, he was willing to think of suicide, and he kept with him a little bottle of suitable pills. He could contemplate using the pills though he still had books to write and things to do. But anything was better than being taken by the Germans in their inhumane genius. It was good to record that he met with "wonderful kindness" on board. Several of the wretched lot fell ill, one poor old woman died, and "three went off their heads." The rest had to wash in common tubs of unchanged water used by dozens of persons, a leveling experience: "There can be few class distinctions among people who are all equally dirty." Ordinarily even a slow boat would take only a matter of a day or a night to voyage from Cannes to the west coast of England; but the collier, in an evasive route by way of Algiers and Portugal, took "three weeks to the day" to reach Liverpool, where the exhausted passengers were kindly received. A while later, Mr. Maugham took a plane from Bristol to Lisbon. There he boarded the Pan American Clipper at nine o'clock in the morning and arrived at New York the next day soon after one o'clock. He noted that he had three dollars in his pocket and, he added, "I ordered an old-fashioned."

IV

Finishing his terrapin in sherry, Mr. Maugham laid down his spoon. He touched his lips with his napkin, and with a slow turn of his sleek head he surveyed the company and made one of the two memorable remarks that he offered during that little party.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"N-now that we've eaten it," he asked, "wh-why is it so-so expensive?"

As there was no answer to this except by general nervous laughter to convert it to witticism, the conversation went on without Mr. Maugham for a little while. I was still held by my thought of how amazing it was that this small, obscurely wounded, seemingly frail man had survived an ordeal foreign to all his habit of life. At a proper moment and in simple concern, I said, "Mr. Maugham, after all you had to go through to come to this country, I hope you are comfortably situated here."

He turned his unlighted, penetrating gaze upon me. In the second of his remembered remarks, he said, bringing together with wan elegance the extremes of his recent experience, "Y-yes, th-thank you. I am at the R-ritz, where they give me r-rates, as I am a r-refugee."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An Historian Who Writes History

JACQUES BARZUN

If you read THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR regularly, the chances are that when you read books they are not exclusively novels. Nor do you (I like to think) confine yourself to biography, particularly the modern kind, dropsical with details and bemeaning with gossip. What then? Literary criticism is abundant but rarely written in English—the English words are there, but not the language. Fortunately there is history—if you can find it. An obvious source is the catalogue of almost any university press, but what you see listed in the section History leaves you puzzled and dismayed. Do you really want to read *Chocolate and Labor—Friends or Enemies?: The Story of Hershey, Pennsylvania*? Or: *Prepared for* Moby Dick—*the Level of Schooling Among Whaling Captains: A Sampling from Cape Cod.* Or again: *Man and Beast in the Pony Express: A Freudian Interpretation.* The first two studies, if they were ever to be written, might well contribute something toward a true history, and the last would perhaps be very good fun for the reader with a sense of humor. But none of the three would give what history is for: philosophy teaching by example.

Where then does one turn? It would be invidious on my part to single out a couple of my friends among the few contemporary Americans who write genuine history. I prefer to mention and discuss an English writer who ought to be far better known in this country than he is at present. I refer to Max Beloff, sometime professor of government and public administration at Oxford, now retired and a member of the House of Lords. He deserves our notice on several counts.

To begin with, he writes lucid and engaging prose of that effortless kind the English have mastered, and which imparts narrative color and suspense to the discussion of ideas. Next, Beloff knows our country well and has written authoritative works about it. Finally, he is—despite his Oxford title—an historian in the classic mold.

The probable cause of his not being a familiar name among us after publishing a score of books and many essays, all with a pressure on current preoccupations, is that his interests have led him into three separate regions of the past and present: Great Britain, Russia, and the United States. Our age of specialism is intolerant of breadth, even when it is accompanied by competence all around. Fame follows concentration. It is safer to repeat oneself shamelessly than to try to carry one's first readers across an intellectual boundary. American scholars in Max Beloff's subjects do value his contributions; he is invited to conferences and universities; his work on Soviet foreign policy has been a textbook for decades; but his clannish hosts and readers have not come together to form a critical mass of appreciators.

In England, which has given him recognition, he is a man apart for a different reason: his independent views—they never sufficiently echo the prevailing assumptions and conclusions. He has therefore been all his life "something of an outsider," never a member of any "cozy coterie of historians."

All these Anglo-American facts lend added interest to *An Historian in the 20th Century: Chapters in Intellectual Autobiography*, from

✪ JACQUES BARZUN, distinguished critic and historian, is the author of *The Culture We Deserve* and *An Essay on French Verse for Readers of English Poetry.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which I have just quoted and which Yale has just published in both London and the U.S. The plan of the book is ingenious. After a "Defense of History," we are embarked on the story of Beloff's life as it unfolded on two intersecting lines of achievement: that of personal and public existence and that of research and reflection. The art with which these lines are traced and mingled is itself a pleasure. The titles of the chapters show the merger of inquiry and conclusion: "The Uniqueness of Britain"; "The United States: The Repudiation of History"; "The Russian Enigma: In or Out?" Surrounding these leading themes are other findings and judgments, often arising from the author's temporary assignments in government work. They are grouped under the headings: "Europe: Myth and Reality"; "The Jewish Experience"; "The Idea of France"; and "The Fall of Empires."

When I said that Max Beloff is a classic historian, I meant among other things that his treatment of men and ideas is chronological (i.e., narrative) and philosophical (i.e., moral). In other words, with him, form and substance are the opposite of what we have come—under duress—to call "academic." The unusual conciseness of this autobiography—130 pages—is in keeping with that difference. Yet on every page the reader is led by some retrospect or comparison to think hard about the pressure of past on present. The facts may be common property, but assent or dissent on significance is sharply focused by an uncommon frankness in the wording. Let me italicize examples: Have the members of the American Congress lost individuality and independence? "The large staffs and spacious offices are symbols . . . of *infeodation* to special interests. The Congressman and even the Senator has *become a delegate rather than a representative.*" Or again: "In India it begins to look as though . . . the fractures of religion and race, of caste and language, increasingly call into question the country's *ability to function as a united, secular, and tolerant republic.*" At this last point one cannot help entertaining the unwelcome thought that the cheers about anti-colonialism may be premature, not to say inappropriate. The source of Beloff's misgiving and ours is not secret: "What I ask myself about the 'anti-colonialist' school of historians is: 'Do they read the newspapers?'"

The query is far from implying an expectation that governments shall work to perfection, but putting it does imply a vivid concern for the fate of human beings: "I begin with the presumption that, with the possible exception of some religious enthusiasts desirous of martyrdom, most human beings in all societies wish to live out in peace the span of their natural lives. For this reason, wherever the retreat of empire leads to large-scale bloodshed, one must ask whether the people have actually benefited from the imperial retreat."

This is no rhetorical question; how often is it asked as a real one? At the news of mutual massacre, do we ponder or do we merely nod the head—or shake it—in partisan fashion? Truly free thought would consider alternatives: "There has been much sympathetic writing about the sufferings of Beirut, but no one asks whether it was not better off under the Turks or the French than as the capital of 'independent' Lebanon." It is clear that Beloff the historian does not agree with "enlightened opinion." At a conference celebrating Churchill, he defended the statesman's forebodings about Egypt and India. He was thereupon made to feel "like a flat-earther at a conclave of astronomers."

The flat-earther's argument for the study of history is that it generates in the student or reader the long perspective. But he also shows that the length of it does not exclude present-day moral judgments; in fact, it strengthens them by reminding us that the horrors of violent change are rarely the "price" of some positive good. Those who look on from outside and approve the carnage are paying the supposed price with others' blood. One should not be righteous so comfortably, even though "all one can try to do is not to be carried away by fashionable slogans."

The modesty of that injunction is characteristic of Beloff's self-portrayal. His is not a self-conscious, shuffling modesty; hence it is serene. The true scholar is at once confident of what he asserts, ready to hear confutation, and able to survive it. Urbanity is the classic historian's tone, rarely that of the revisionist who, believing that objectivity is a myth and all human thought driven by politics, seems always to address the public from a stump.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Seeing Max Beloff give credit as he goes—to his teachers, his colleagues, his opponents—one is reminded of an earlier age of scholarship, when it was a discourtesy not to be at ease with oneself and others and when open utterance of one's beliefs led to controversy, not silent boycott.

I have so far dealt only with our historian's obiter dicta on issues of the day, intending thereby to lure the reader (especially the instant-indignant) into the circuit of these cogent essays. But the most valuable are those that deal with events well in the past. They do so in two ways: in the foreground they summarize the conclusions reached on great subjects—Thomas Jefferson, the English Civil War, Soviet foreign policy, absolute monarchy, the European community, United States federalism, and various aspects of the democratic process.

The other past that is treated is the author's own, from his rearing in a Russian-Jewish family of moderately orthodox culture, followed by his education at St. Paul's and Oxford, to his academic posts (Manchester, Oxford), and his work for Chatham House (equivalent to our Council on Foreign Relations), and various government boards. This direct political experience, he makes clear, influenced his outlook on the vicarious experience derived from documents. It is an old maxim that to be an historian, one should be at least forty years old and have spent some time in public affairs. On this point, see the essays collected in Beloff's *The Intellectual in Politics* (1970).

To know at firsthand that institutions seen from inside do not match their description from outside leads the historian to revalue political history. Reliving the tangled lives of the Balkan nations, Beloff remarks: "The extraordinary view held in some quarters that 'kings and battles' are matters of secondary interest not affecting the mainstream of human development could not be more wrong." But never an exclusivist, Beloff at the same time expresses a high regard for the work of the French *Annales* school and Fernand Braudel in particular. Here I part company with my colleague. I recognize the great industry the Annalists have displayed: adding up the insignificant to extract a significance is their laborious method. But to me the result is not history; it is retrospective sociology.

Their findings are vitiated precisely by the neglect of wars, coups d'état, and other unique events; of persons with, as it were, a name and address; of the tale showing their deeds and their characters. The very topics of their sociological reconstruction I find unconvincing—even those I invented at the beginning of this essay. But alas! the classic historian I am praising is nobly disposed to commend Theodore Zeldin's two-volume inventory of French facts. I call it an inventory, because it is a mass of disparate, often dubious, loosely organized, and dyschronological bits and pieces, which fail to make up the promised portrait of France between 1848 and 1945.

I agree, of course, that politics is not the sole or best aspect of human affairs. My own studies have taken as their material the cultural slice of the past—also a mass of facts difficult to organize; but history must cohere; it is a continuity, not a sand heap. Accordingly, I have used politics and public events as the most convenient framework for setting other human accomplishments in their defined place and due relations.

I return to Beloff with enjoyment and esteem when I come upon the signs of his wide cultivation, notably his love of music. At one point he suggests in passing an inversion of my scheme for shaping cultural history: for a while, he says, he thought that music might be used to supply the difficult definition, geographical and political, of the term "Europe"—the major-minor scale as natural frontier!

One more undertaking by this many-sided thinker he passes over in one sentence, perhaps because he wrote an article about it in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (Summer 1979). It is his founding of an independent university in modern England, at Buckingham. The story is one of amazing courage and impossible success. Launched at the peak of the school regimentation for "equality" that replaced the famed English grammar schools by nondescript "comprehensives," Beloff's proposal met grim opposition from both the government and the educationists. Without a charter from the state, it could not exist; nor, if existing, continue without endowment—and England is not used to raising funds from private

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sources. But Beloff and a few others persevered and Buckingham now flourishes without public subsidy, free to staff itself at will and offer programs of its own devising. I had the privilege of witnessing at close hand the difficult beginnings and I may say that Beloff's strategy and diplomacy qualify him for secretary of state under any administration.

I find encouraging also what our author has to say under the rubric "The Idea of France." For many reasons, the English overdo whatever feelings they entertain toward their cross-channel neighbor. Their carpings and their enthusiasms are generally excessive and equally blind. Beloff sees the very different yet closely related nation as if it were his own; that is, he discerns not one, petrified image, but a succession and a mixture of "characters" that have varied with time, chance, and the regime. This same perceptiveness makes him say "Europe: Myth and Reality," not *or*: it is the classic historian acknowledging "the inevitable lack of finality in all historical judgments."

He might have added: ". . . in science as well." For it is a mistake to believe that history is alone uncertain, and damaged by the fact. This is on the contrary its virtue: it stays open to correction indefinitely and all its fair fragments are true. The long perspective is fully rewarded. The historical mind, like the judicial, is kept in balance by precedent and equity and achieves the moral poise I mentioned as Beloff's most striking characteristic. All it takes is a simple thing, but rare: an exact and retentive observation of the ways of man.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEMOIR

Album of Shadow Selves

STANLEY KAUFFMANN

I

My brother Lewis, who had a defective heart, died twenty-two days after he was born. This was in 1924 when I was eight. I knew that he was not well, and one midday when I came home from school for lunch, my sister, who was four, met me at the door, unusually quiet. My mother rushed to hug us both to her, crying as she held us. I didn't cry. I knew I was supposed to feel sad, but I could remember only a few glimpses of a round head in a crib. He had meant nothing to me.

Through the years he has come to mean more. I can't envision him as a boy, a youth, a man. I have no fantasies about him. I can only wonder what my own life would have been if his heart had been sound. The Depression years in my family were tight. If there had been a third child, would I have got to college? If I hadn't been given the chance to study the subjects at which I've been spending my life, what would I have done? Who would I have been?

Of course his life might have brought blessings as well as burdens, but the blessings are conjectures, the burdens would have been sure. Most of the time, when I think of him, I'm glad he faded fast. I never mentioned this to my parents. Anyway, I can't recall that his name ever came up in the years that followed.

Certainly, if he had lived, I would have had a different life. But thinking of him, I think of other lives, quite different, much more imaginable, that I might easily have had. Those other lives haunt and trail the life I have had like persistent Indian scouts pacing the hero at a distance in a John Ford western, never quite disappearing, always taunting.

One of those other lives could have been with Enid. She and I were in a university drama department together, in the same class, and in our sophomore year, 1932, we entwined. From that time until the end of the first year after college, about four years in all, we thought of ourselves as a pair. We didn't literally live together. That would have been impossible for money reasons and, in those days, for social taboos that may now seem quaint but were then grim. Still we thought of ourselves as a couple. One of the things we laughed about was that there was never a formal proposal or acceptance, we simply assumed after a time that we would spend our lives together. Everyone around us assumed it, too. I still have letters sent to me by others that begin "Dear Enid and Stanley."

She was the daughter of an English-born father and a German-born mother. I was the son of a Jewish family that had its origins in Germany. We thought ourselves quite daring to be together—forever, as we thought—in spite of our different backgrounds. It was exceptional at the time. We thought it part of our high destiny, a warrant of our superiority that we had risen above custom and, on both sides, prejudice.

Enid was two years older than I. The difference in our ages seemed inconsequential at the start, but it had an effect we could not have foreseen. At eighteen she was more than two years older than I in outlook, in gravity. This became more and more clear as time went on. But it was not until years later that I saw the real trouble with our relationship. I was too

✪ STANLEY KAUFFMANN, film critic for *The New Republic,* has contributed eight previous Albums to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, three of which are included in *Albums of Early Life.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

young to deal with someone's devotion. I knew how to be in love, precociously perhaps, but I didn't know how to treat someone's love for me. Her love gave me power. Like a princeling ascended too soon, I abused it.

The years melted past. College was finished, then eight or ten months more. I was trying to be a writer and was making small progress. I was committed to a theater company that was itself making small progress. These facts only heightened my petty tyrannies. Enid didn't press me to change my plans so that we could move toward marriage, but, I saw later, this was probably due to her diminishing interest in me. If I had been able to see what I was doing, had understood my tyrannies, she might not have left.

But she did leave. One Sunday when I went out to Long Island to visit her and her parents, she and I went for our familiar walk in a wooded park, but she kept her distance from me. Without saying anything directly about it. The following Sunday, when we went for a walk again, she kept her distance again. This time she told me that she thought we ought to part, that she was interested in another man, someone I didn't know.

Looking back, I can see that she was quite right to leave if only because my first reaction was not loss but hurt pride. Future embarrassment with friends. In the months to come, I never felt desolated about it, only humiliated. That passed, and I felt free. Two years later I met Laura, and soon I was close to grateful to Enid for enduring me as she had done. I had learned, changed. I was a different person for Laura, one she has managed to tolerate since then. If I had matured with Enid, we might have stayed together. So I can't help being happy that I didn't grow up then. I can't fully imagine a life spent with Enid, but I know what life with Laura has been. What a narrow escape I had. Saved by my imperfections.

Still, at one point, he was possible, the self that would have been Enid's husband. He courses along with me on the edge of visibility, getting grayer, balder, stouter, perhaps even more so than the self I became. One more role I had that might have continued. Who would that person have been? Where would he be now? What would he be doing? Would he be writing about it?

II

Two other shadow selves, in the battalion of them, stand out. In 1956 Laura and I lived in London for some months. I had been working in New York as the editor-in-chief of a small publishing house, and we had decided, had saved, to spend a year abroad. We had been in London for a few weeks five years before, and when we returned, I felt, as I had done the first time, wonderfully comfortable. All the street names of literature, the odd alleys and cabs, the city of books and films and fancy once again captured me. And in those days, I smoked a pipe, which helped.

We were in London just when a novel of mine appeared there, and we saw something of my English publisher, Fred Warburg, and his wife. Once Fred and I had lunch at a French place in Soho. Mrs. Warburg and Laura had lunched there the previous week, and "the wives," as Fred put it, had recommended it.

Mostly he and I talked business during lunch, the next novel I was supposed to be writing. Suddenly, I changed the subject. Fred knew about my publishing experience. It was as an editor that I had first visited him five years earlier. Suddenly, without having thought about it, awash with love of London more than with wine, I raised the subject of a job in Fred's firm. So that I could stay there.

"In London, you mean," said Fred.

"Yes. Specifically with you. I'm not really sure I'm asking for a job. Just wondering."

"Yes," drawled Fred with that especially impassive face he put on when he was interested in an idea. "Well, I'd have to wonder about it, too."

"While we're both wondering, could you give me an idea of what such a job would pay? If it came to pass."

"I can tell you precisely," said Fred. "It's what we're paying the man who might be moving on and would create the opening."

He mentioned the figure. Translated into dollars, it was the salary that my New York firm had paid the mail-room clerk.

"Not the New York scale, I know," Fred conceded, "but things are different here. Besides, there are possible supplements. Lecturing, reviewing, BBC, that sort of thing. The present man does them."

I could tell that the idea had struck a spark

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in him. Despite the dismal salary, I was tingling. London! We agreed that there was no hurry. The present man wasn't leaving until October, and this was early August. We would both think it over. I would investigate visas and work permits.

When I told Laura about the talk, she said, after a moment, "H'm." She was having almost as good a time as I was in London, but, she said, that was different from spending the rest of her life there. "Besides," she added, "wives always get treated like wives here." As if to argue a bit on her side, I mentioned the salary. She didn't say anything. She just picked up the magazine she had been reading.

I spent a day or so pretending to think the matter over, playing with the possibility of converting my London fantasy into dailiness. I saw flashes of myself ten, twenty, thirty years on, a Londoner realized. But I couldn't make the fantasy reasonable. Facts intervened.

Laura said "Good-o" when I told her I wasn't going to pursue the matter with Fred. She knew how I felt about London, she knew I had just been having a kind of fun torturing myself with the idea. She knew that, under my infatuation, were a few wandering grains of realism.

The next day I had to write to Fred about something else. I added a postscript saying that the possible job we had discussed wouldn't really work out from my or our point of view. He would probably be relieved to hear this, I said.

III

In less than a year I was back in New York, in publishing, and a year or so after that, I began to write criticism, mostly of films at first, while I kept on at publishing. In 1960 I was an editor at Knopf when Random House bought the firm. I had met Bennett Cerf, the head of Random House, and late in 1960 when Knopf discharged me for what Cerf thought poor reasons, he took it on himself to help me find another job.

He had connections in the film world, and he told the eastern head of a big studio that I ought to be their eastern story editor. The studio chief telephoned, and we met. He had read some of my reviews and liked them. He valued Cerf's recommendation. The meeting went well. Then there was another meeting, during which the president of the studio, visiting from the coast, came in to meet me. I sensed wheels rolling, gears meshing. Then came the moment to talk about details.

I had been writing film criticism for a little over two years, and I didn't want to stop. And there was other writing I wanted to do. It was not unprecedented, I knew, for someone to be employed in a field and also to write, even to write criticism in that very field. The studio job had tinselly glitter, and I've always liked a certain amount of tinselly glitter, but I couldn't abandon the other things I wanted to do.

When the eastern chief seemed to be finishing off our talk, I said, "There's just one thing."

"What's that?" he asked with a generous smile.

"I'd want to work only half a day every day. You'd consider that, of course, in the salary. But I'd want at least half my time for writing. Including criticism."

A peculiar thing happened. The smile didn't change, but the man behind it changed. He nodded. "I understand. We'll think about it."

I told Laura what I had said. She said, "You should have told him earlier." He telephoned the next morning, still friendly. He didn't think my idea would work out. There would be trouble with the time differential between New York and the coast. My schedule wouldn't fit. Anyway, that was the reason he gave. He said it had been a pleasure to meet me, and he said good-bye. I felt I was saying good-bye to Bennett Cerf, too.

Laura, who had been listening, said nothing. But I knew she was chuckling. There went my Hollywood self. Even though I would have worked in New York, it was a Hollywood self. I regretted it. A lot of what I would have dealt with would have been piffle, still a lot of what I had dealt with in publishing, even some of it at Knopf, had been piffle, and films had close links with the theater where I had begun. But I couldn't regret holding on to what I was now free to do.

My Hollywood self took up a position near my London self and my Enid self and whatever I would have been if my brother had lived and all the other selves I might have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been. All of them moving along in parallel lines, watching shrewdly while I keep trying to justify the self I am.

Often, when I walk down a street and pass people, I think of the other lives that each of them might have had, lives they have avoided or lost. All those armies of possibilities moving through the streets, slipping through the ranks of other armies like mutually consenting ghosts, each person I see merely the visible star in his or her galaxy.

Would I have been happier as one of the other selves in my galaxy? I don't for a moment think so, but I don't know. I don't absolutely know. That is finally what is so irritating about having only one life to live.

I sometimes feel pity for all those other selves that will never see the light. Robert Frost wondered about the road not taken, but there are many more roads than one that are not taken, and it's not always a matter of choice. And they are not roads, really, they are selves. Pushing on, invisible to others, to their own particular deaths.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christopher Dawson

JAMES HITCHCOCK

The English Catholic historian Christopher Dawson (1889–1970) was a man of paradoxes —a conservative, he was at best cool to the capitalist system and unalterably opposed to the technological developments that made it possible; a deep-dyed Englishman rooted in the changeless countryside, he was among the most cosmopolitan of scholars; an ardent religious believer, his analyses were almost unfailingly cool and detached; venerating tradition and stability, he nonetheless admitted that Christianity had been one of the most disruptive forces in the history of civilization; long critical of the United States as the embodiment of everything destructive in the modern world, he spent his last productive years here and hoped that in the United States, if anywhere, his plans for educational reform would be realized.

The paradoxes extended to Dawson's approach to history itself. When he first began publishing, shortly after World War I, the assumption that "history is past politics" was still prevalent, with occasional exceptions for rudimentary economics and for ideas whose historical influence was too obvious to be ignored. The kind of social history now prominent in the profession (of the family, for example) was then regarded as mere curiosity or antiquarianism.

Dawson, who detested modernity in most of its manifestations, was daring in his methodology. Until very late in life, the only regular academic appointment he ever held was at University College, Exeter, around 1930, where he lectured in sociology. Some of his earliest publications, among the very few that ever appeared in strictly scholarly journals, were in *The Sociological Review*, and he was chosen to present the case for sociology in a 1934 symposium entitled *Science for a New World*.

Dawson was, however, a sociologist in the classical sense of an interpretive theorist, and he showed no interest in later statistical approaches to the discipline. He was certainly ahead of his time in calling for a marriage of history and the social sciences, including anthropology, and even showing in his own work how it might in fact be accomplished.

Dawson's original approach to history was made possible because he was one of the last of the noble breed of English historians who were amateurs in the strict sense. He did not pursue advanced study after graduating from Oxford and, except for a few years in the middle and toward the end of his life, held no academic appointment. (On several occasions he sought for a university appointment, but the absence of an advanced degree hampered him in each case.) Most of the time he lived secluded in the country, reading omnivorously in his large personal library, rarely attending conferences. Altogether it was a regimen that served well to nurture the fresh approach to history that he pursued.

The Age of the Gods (1929), his first book, was a foray into pre-history that won the praise of such experts in the field as V. Gordon Childe. This survey of primitive religious beliefs, mainly in Europe, established the characteristic Dawsonian approach—meticulous and abundant attention to facts, leading to bold interpretations. Those who disagreed with his conclusions could rarely catch him in errors of fact.

✪ JAMES HITCHCOCK is professor of history at St. Louis University. His latest book is *Years of Crisis: Collected Essays, 1970–1983.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In many ways Dawson's life's work was a running debate with the Enlightenment, which he thought had come to dominate modern Western thinking so thoroughly as to make it impossible for modern people even to understand previous ways of thinking. He realized quite early that modern anthropology had undermined Enlightenment assumptions in one important way—"primitive" beliefs could not merely be dismissed as absurd and irrational but were shown to have profound meaning within their particular cultures. Dawson saw perhaps sooner than anyone else how cultural relativism, in principle, undermined the supremacy of the Enlightenment by forcing modern Westerners to acknowledge their culture as merely different from those of the past, not necessarily superior.

The Age of the Gods also showed the pervasive importance of religion in culture, the ways in which it shaped and supported the entire social order. Almost all of Dawson's subsequent works aimed to establish the same point, in as much variety and detail as possible.

Raised in a devout Anglican family, Dawson went through a brief period of skepticism as a young man, then entered the Catholic church in 1914, coincident with his marriage to a Catholic woman. He remained intensely devout all of his life and frequently stated his belief that history had meaning only as an ultimate divine plan, so that the disasters of history are violations of the divine order. Except during World War II, when most of his writings ended with fervent homilies on the need for spiritual regeneration, he did not make overt theological points. Dawson made no secret of his Catholic beliefs, and it is a tribute to his own brilliance and to the open-mindedness of the intellectuals of his day (there were exceptions, such as the Marxist historian Christopher Hill), that he was taken seriously even by many who had no sympathy with Catholicism or for religion in general.

Dawson's sensitivity to the place of religion in culture doubtlessly owed much to his faith; perhaps then it is surprising that he was usually cool and analytical about his subjects, which extended to his evaluations of such writers as D. H. Lawrence and H. G. Wells, with whom he had little in common. He managed to make his views of history relevant to those who were not believers simply by demonstrating religion's cultural and historical importance, saying, in effect, that all the religions of mankind, including Christianity, might be based on illusion, but that it could not be denied that they are the engines that in large measure have propelled most human societies. This, he argued, was an indisputable empirical fact whose truth was overlooked by those whom modern culture had rendered insensitive to religion even as a cultural force.

Perhaps Dawson's best-known book, still sometimes used in college courses, was *The Making of Europe* (1932), a study of the crucial period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the emergence of full-blown medieval culture in the eleventh century. Unlike many Catholics of his day, Dawson had no trouble using the term "the dark ages," since the destruction of the empire had inevitably brought human society to a low point. Although he wrote relatively little about the ancient world, he had the deep admiration for the Greeks and Romans common to educated Englishmen of his time, and he once got into a rather ludicrous quarrel with a bellicose Irish cultural nationalist who accused the Romans of having perpetrated nothing but crimes in Europe.

Quite consciously, therefore, Dawson found himself in the paradoxical situation of the Christian classicist who simultaneously regretted Rome's fall but welcomed what he recognized were the revolutionary effects of the coming of Christianity. The paradox was resolved in that the Church provided the necessary cohesion and spiritual energy that alone could replace the vanished classical hegemony, and that it did so in large measure by making itself the protector and disseminator of all that was best in the vanquished culture.

In *The Making of Europe* and a number of subsequent works, including the last book published in his lifetime, *The Formation of Christendom* (1967), he developed in detail the ways in which the Church had provided that spiritual and intellectual cohesion which was the foundation of Western civilization. Part of Dawson's originality was precisely that he did not treat religion as merely one compartment of social life but showed its pervasiveness—habitually Dawson used not only religious writings or the events of ecclesiasti-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cal history but economic practices, social customs, and works of art as evidence of historical reality, anticipating in certain ways the holistic approach to history now common among social historians.

The effectiveness of his method is perhaps best demonstrated in the two sets of Gifford Lectures that Dawson gave at the University of Edinburgh shortly after World War II. Coming as a Catholic medievalist to address an audience perhaps composed half of skeptical academics and half of firm Calvinists, he devoted the first set, published as *Religion and Culture* (1948), to a general survey of his subject in which neither Christianity nor the West figured very much. It was a tour de force involving Asian, African, and even American Indian societies, aiming to show, on the basis purely of empirical evidence, that religion has a universal importance in human affairs. The second series, published as *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (1949), then developed the importance of Catholicism for the West, in a way that could scarcely be denied.

Dawson's deep traditionalism was nurtured in his boyhood, spent mainly in rural places, especially an ancestral family home in the Yorkshire Dales, where Dawsons had been among the local yeomanry for three centuries and where the effects of industrialism had been only slightly felt. In a 1949 essay entitled "Tradition and Inheritance," he described a timeless, stable, ordered community close to the rhythm of nature. He also grew up among books, his father being a retired army officer who was more interested in science than in soldiering, and he believed that the combination of much reading, a certain amount of social isolation, and the opportunity for long rambles through the countryside stimulated his imagination in ways modern urban life makes impossible.

Even though as a historian he recognized the importance of cities in the development of civilization, Dawson found them personally abhorrent, and his adult seclusion in the country was a deliberate choice. His intellectual stimulation came primarily from books and correspondence rather than social contacts, and it was perhaps this as much as anything that permitted his remarkably dispassionate view of the sweep of history. Like most Catholic intellectuals of this time, he was a severe critic of modernity. However, whereas most Catholic intellectuals identified philosophical error as the root cause of modern troubles, Dawson tended to blame economic and political change. He identified technology, nationalism, and economic individualism as the chief enemies of the traditional order.

Although Dawson knew that the medieval order had already begun to unravel before the sixteenth century, he saw Protestantism as the major break between the old and the new. It was a theme he discussed in numerous places, and one he summed up in his late work *The Dividing of Christendom* (1961). Even though a man of deep Christian belief, he treated the Reformation mainly as a political and economic phenomenon, arguing that Protestantism had accommodated itself to the emergent national state and emergent capitalism in ways the Catholic church had not. The Reformation had been made possible, Dawson thought, by the sundering of the historic bond between the Papacy and the northern religious reformers, which broke at the time of the Avignon Papacy of the fourteenth century. Dawson loved the fourteenth-century English poem "The Vision of Piers Plowman" as an authentic expression of the Catholic reform spirit, and he joined in the poem's lament of failure.

The Reformation, by definition, destroyed the religious unity of Western culture and thus guaranteed its spiritual fragmentation. It also, in Dawson's view, gave respectability to political and economic forces that recognized no inherent limits on themselves. (The most radical reform of the Protestants, he argued, was the abolition of monasticism, a way of life that symbolized the complete rejection of acquisitive values.)

But for a time—until the Enlightenment—Western intellectuals still shared a common culture that was at root pre-Christian—that of the ancient classics. Protestantism, Dawson thought, failed to develop a distinctive popular culture of its own, following its rejection of the rich network of popular Catholic piety. Here again what he considered most radical was not what most historians would immediately identify. He thought the smashing of images—the abolition of religious art—impoverished northern culture, leaving the common people with only the Bible, which ultimately was not strong enough to create and sustain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such a culture, and thus made the secularization of popular culture inevitable.

While admitting that thought was freer and perhaps more creative in the Protestant north than in the Catholic south, Dawson nonetheless considered the latter a richer culture, because of baroque art and music. While in the north the imagination was cramped and puritanical, the south gave it free rein, culminating in nothing less than "ecstasy." The north he considered to be predominantly bourgeois, aiming at "a high average standard," while the south manifested wider extremes that encompassed infinite spiritual aspirations. The dynamic of baroque culture was broken, however, by the triumph of royally imposed classicism in France towards the end of the seventeenth century, which in turn gave way to the dry rationalism of the Enlightenment.

Dawson was perhaps the first historian to present the French Revolution as not merely anti-Christian but in its way as a kind of substitute religious movement, an idea summed up in the posthumous book *The Gods of Revolution* (1972). Jacobinism was the first modern political movement that promised nothing less than salvation, an absolute to replace an older absolute deliberately destroyed.

Dawson personally was an heir of the alternative modern Western political tradition, the parliamentary system that developed out of the "high average standard" of the Protestant burghers. He gave due credit to the achievements of liberal humanitarianism, but noted the irony that the same liberalism had created the economic conditions whose sufferings it sought to alleviate. (Some of his condemnations of capitalist acquisitiveness could have been written by Karl Marx.) Liberalism, he argued, was spiritually impoverished, having deliberately cut itself off from the religious roots of its civilization. It offered men freedom but could propose no higher use of that freedom than economic and political self-interest. His critique of liberalism appears especially in *Progress and Religion* (1929), *The Modern Dilemma* (1932), *Religion and the Modern State* (1936), and *Beyond Politics* (1939). Dawson saw modern liberalism as even more deeply destructive of spiritually unified culture in its radical individualism—economic acquisitiveness without regard for the common good, reliance on technology to the point of destroying the integrity of nature (in general terms he was a kind of ecologist), and assertive nationalism directly opposed to the very idea of a universal Western culture.

Naturally, the events leading up to World War II struck Dawson as the final culmination of malign forces that had been building up for several centuries. Like many historians, he was more sure of his long-term than of his short-term judgments—occasional journalistic essays in the 1930s were uncharacteristically confused and nervous, lacking the magisterial authority with which he usually wrote. Although rejecting a principled pacifism, he abhorred war as the ultimate expression of unbridled nationalism and technology, and until 1939 remained hopeful that a peaceful settlement with Germany could be reached. (He did not, however, explicitly endorse Neville Chamberlain's policies.) More significant, his dislike of capitalism and his conviction that an alternative between it and socialism must exist caused him to urge Englishmen to reserve judgment about the economic system of fascism, which he rejected as a political system because of its fanatical nationalism and its subversion of religion to its own ends.

When the war began, Dawson wrote tirelessly in support of the Allies, part of the time in an unaccustomed embodiment as a kind of activist—editor of the *Dublin Review*, a leading Catholic journal, and as the Catholic vice president of an ecumenical organization called the Sword of the Spirit. Internal politics soon caused him to give up his editorship, and when the sympathetic Cardinal Arthur Hinsley of Westminster died, Dawson was forced also to withdraw from the Sword of the Spirit.

While wholeheartedly opposing Nazism in his wartime works, especially *The Judgment of the Nations* (1942), Dawson was also at pains to make Westerners understand what was really at stake, fearing that they would see it in entirely political and economic terms and fail to understand the deeper crisis. He argued ceaselessly that fascism and communism both fed upon the spiritual vacuity of the West, offering people an absolute faith that they could find nowhere else, and was testimony to the bankruptcy of secularization. (The Sword of the Spirit had been formed by the Anglican bishop George Bell, because of his conviction, shared by Dawson, that the war had to lead to a complete spiritual regen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eration, a task in which all religions must join.)

At least in print Dawson talked only rather obliquely about the plight of the Jews. In *Religion and the Modern State* (1935), he wrote of the spiritual power of the biblical Israel that, weak in material resources, would triumph through obedience to the divine will. The fanatical Nazi theory of racial supremacy Dawson counted among the evil aspects of Hitler's system, predicting that its "racial and political mysticisms" would be a source of fundamental conflict. The desire to build a new Jerusalem he counted as a root cause of totalitarianism, and he observed sardonically that there were various versions of this new holy city—that of the Soviets had no temple, that of the Nazis had no Jews, while that of liberal reformers was composed entirely of suburbs. In a 1939 essay on the League of Nations he noted that "racialism" had become a key tenet of the League's enemies and, while by no means persuaded that the League could solve international problems, Dawson always sided with internationalism over nationalism. In *Beyond Politics* (1939), he asserted that the Nazis were making Jews the scapegoats for the dissatisfactions of mechanistic, cosmopolitan, urban mass society; and in *The Judgment of the Nations* (1942), he again cited "racialism" as a sign of Western civilization's collapse, arguing among other things that Europe had always been a racial melting pot.

Unlike many others, Dawson emerged from the war pessimistic. His anti-communism was so obvious as to need no belaboring, but it was a muted theme in his post-war writings, perhaps for fear that it could be a cause of Western complacency. Like many intellectuals, he was vague about specific programs. He seems to have found economics uncongenial and, apart from his aversion to both capitalism and socialism, gave little indication of how he thought the economy should be organized. In politics, too, he committed himself to no system or program. He valued the English system for the liberty it protected, and argued that liberty was not only not synonymous with democracy, it might even be antithetical to it. The most ominous Western political development he regarded as the inexorable growth of the "benign" state, taking responsibility for more and more aspects of its citizens' lives, until it threatened to become a totalitarianism. (His view of such matters was radical—he counted military conscription and public education as major examples of this, and thought modern communications made it possible to homogenize public opinion in accordance with state policy.)

Dawson embodied yet one more paradox in his stance as a deeply conservative Englishman, rooted in his native soil, who watched with no great regret the end of empire. In his post-war political works—*Understanding Europe* (1952) and *The Movement of World Revolution* (1956)—he argued that Western imperialism was itself a product of those modern forces that had damaged the West. But he also could not approve the movement of colonial liberation, because he saw (perhaps among the first Western observers to do so) that this liberation was not primarily a reassertion of traditional native cultures but was carried on in the name of various Western ideologies, notably Marxism, and embraced Western nationalism, acquisitiveness, and technology. Despite missionary activities, he charged that the West had shown the rest of the world its hard and materialistic side rather than its spiritual side, and had thus forfeited respect.

The last decade of Dawson's active life was mainly spent in prescribing the remedy that, sooner or later, most intellectuals see as the solution to the world's problems—education. Not persuaded by signs of religious revival in the 1950s, Dawson thought secularization was extending itself, and that religious believers themselves were deeply affected by it in ways they did not even comprehend. They too had been cut off from their traditions, and his strategy for the regeneration of Western culture was to begin with Catholics who were to steep themselves in their own tradition, which was the root tradition of the West, so they could serve as a leaven in the larger society.

Rather unexpectedly, this brought Dawson to the United States. Until World War II, he had been generally critical of America, seeing it rather stereotypically as the very embodiment of the rampant individualism and the materialism of modernity. Insofar as he recognized American religiosity, he saw America as exclusively puritan, and thus as implicated in the origins of the problem itself. But the war caused him to claim America as an ally in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

struggle for the soul of the West, and afterwards he treated it with a new interest and respect, the latter probably growing out of increasing knowledge.

In 1958, aged sixty-nine, Christopher Dawson crossed the Atlantic for the first time, in order to accept the newly established Charles Chauncey Stillman professorship of Roman Catholic Studies at Harvard. It was his first regular academic appointment since Exeter, almost thirty years before. (His arrival was attended by vexing complications. Because of an old tubercular scar on his lung, the American embassy in London would not issue him a visa. The Catholic senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts promised to expedite the matter but did not, and Dawson was admitted to the United States through the good offices of another son of Harvard, the Protestant senator Leverett Saltonstall.)

Throughout the 1950s Dawson had been urging his Christian Studies program, a proposal that culminated in one of his best-known books, *The Crisis of Western Education* (1961). The proposal was an attempt to remedy what he regarded as a glaring anomaly—in a supposedly Christian culture, students, even those in Catholic institutions of higher learning, were taught very little about their religious traditions. (The English system, he thought, gave students a fairly deep knowledge of a defined area, such as classics, while the American system gave them a superficial knowledge of many things.)

This proposal could have achieved full implementation only in the United States, since America was one of the few countries in the world where Catholics had their own institutions of higher learning (although Dawson thought Christian Studies could be taught purely historically). In fact, his proposal achieved only partial implementation at a few institutions. The issue prefigured the deep chasms that would emerge in American Catholicism following the Second Vatican Council of 1962–65.

American Catholic intellectual life at the time was dominated by the disciples of the thirteenth-century philosopher Thomas Aquinas, and Thomistic philosophy (to a lesser extent, theology) was the backbone of the curriculum of virtually all Catholic colleges and universities. The most widely revered Catholic thinker of the day was the French Thomist Jacques Maritain, who spent much of his time in America after 1945. Dawson was somewhat cool to Maritain's thought because, while he believed in the truth of Thomistic philosophy, he doubted the pedagogical wisdom of placing it at the center of undergraduate education, and he saw in Thomism an overly abstract and unhistorical approach to reality and one at variance with his own. The essence of Dawson's curricular proposal was to introduce students to a wide range of classic texts, both pre- and post-medieval, as well as the religious arts in their many incarnations, and it extended to such things as the official liturgy (worship) of the Church and the lives of the saints, which were usually considered devotional rather than intellectual. The plan was the result of Dawson's lifelong sense of the fundamental wholeness of every genuine culture.

The Catholic educational establishment reacted in a largely negative way to Dawson's proposal, viewing it as unnecessary interference in a basically sound system. Some explicitly raised the question how the mere study of history, with its change and flux, could lead to unchanging truth. (In a sense, Dawson's entire life's work was based on the belief that such truth could indeed be discerned amidst the swirl of time.) On the other side, self-consciously liberal Catholic educators accused Dawson of trying to impose a religious ghetto; they were urging that the Catholic curriculum be broadened to encompass the mainstream of modern secular culture. (It was one of the many ironies of the period that, within less than ten years, even some of his conservative critics acquiesced in the schools' virtual abandonment of Thomistic philosophy.)

Dawson had never been a dynamic lecturer, and at Harvard he was also plagued by illness, so that his stay there was not altogether a pedagogical success. After having suffered a stroke, he returned to England a year early, in 1962. Another stroke followed, and after leaving the United States he did very little sustained intellectual work. (Extensive lectures on a variety of topics that he prepared at Harvard remain unpublished.) Among the misfortunes of his final illness is that it prevented him from leaving more than a few scraps of opinion about the momentous changes occurring in the Catholic church as a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

result of the Second Vatican Council. Deep traditionalist that he was, it is likely that he would have deplored many of them, especially changes in the liturgy, and he would probably have found the rudderless curriculum now common in Catholic schools far more objectionable than a rigid Thomism.

One of Dawson's reservations about Maritain was that he was too much of a medievalist in the sense of believing that all fundamental truth had been discovered and formulated at that time in history. Dawson was a medievalist in that he regarded the Middle Ages as the most spiritually cohesive and unified period of Western history. However, Dawson's heart seems to have belonged even more to the period of the Counter-Reformation, whose baroque creativity he recognized as something new. In prescribing for the regeneration of culture, he did not urge a return to the past but always predicted that some new and unforeseeable creation would appear. Whereas the Thomists seemed to think that eternal truth had been encapsulated in particular forms once and for all, Dawson as a historian was interested in tracing its changing embodiments over time.

Dawson was sometimes dismissed as a popularizer, but, if that term means a writer who explains complex ideas to the general public, he was in a sense the exact opposite. Rather than condescending to the level of the general reader (although he seldom wrote an unclear sentence), all his works presupposed a great amount of knowledge. His scholarship was sometimes faulted for its sparsity of footnotes, but this was because he engaged in a dialogue with the past in which he assumed that his readers were as familiar with history as he was. (Away as he was from cities and universities, he had a very large personal library in several languages and, free of academic duties, he probably had more time to read than most professional historians. He read in a great variety of historical periods, as well as in other disciplines, showing competency in fields as diverse as the philosophy of science and medieval Provençal poetry.)

Dawson was by definition an amateur historian, since he lacked both a doctorate and a regular academic appointment. In one other important respect he did not follow the usual model of the professional—he seldom if ever did research in manuscript sources, never had the experience of spending long hours turning over dusty manuscripts perhaps not read by anyone in centuries. But, since he wrote no specialized studies, it was probably unnecessary that he do so. His work was based on primary sources in the form of theoretical treatises, imaginative literature, legal codes, political manifestoes, autobiographies, liturgical texts, even popular journalism, as well as sources most conventional historians of his day seldom noticed—the visual arts and music. Beyond that the strength of his method lay in his careful digestion of the work of other scholars, an amazing range of secondary works, so that in the same book, for example, he could discuss a fine point of Minoan plumbing and cite *The Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology.*

By the time the "new social history," such as that practiced by the Annales school in France, had begun to have its effect, Dawson was too ill to notice. It is likely that his substantive traditionalism would have led to his approving this methodological innovation—the close attention to the fabric of cultural life characteristic of the new social history would in principle have fit well with Dawson's own interests and extended them. If the new social history can sometimes be viewed as turning over historical rocks to expose the strange creatures hidden beneath them, Dawson himself never idealized past ages—his case for the Middle Ages, for example, was not that it was an idyllic time (he recognized the brutality of many of the knightly class and the venality of many of the clergy) but that it proclaimed ideals capable of inspiring a whole civilization.

Dawson defended "metahistory" against an attack by the Oxford historian Allan Bullock, and apparently wanted to be included in the category. Among his early published essays was an evaluation of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West,* in which Dawson welcomed Spengler's view of civilizations as organic entities to be understood in their entirety but objected that the metaphor led to Spengler's treating each historic civilization as self-enclosed, whereas to Dawson the most interesting developments were often on the temporal and geographical boundaries of particular societies.

He also treated with sympathy the early work of Arnold Toynbee (who in turn praised

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dawson highly), although pointing out ways in which he thought Toynbee had misread evidence, especially in positing as "civilizations" certain societies that Dawson thought did not merit the title. Toynbee's later religious syncretism he naturally found objectionable but, characteristically, did not object on theological grounds but by pointing out Toynbee's own inconsistency—if each great civilization has been animated by a particular religion, a single world religion would fail to sustain any civilization.

The eclipse of Dawson's reputation began even before his death, during that chaotic period in Western history, the sixties, when the symbolic slaying of fathers was almost mandatory, not least in Catholic circles. (Dawson lost authority at the same time as T. S. Eliot, who had praised Dawson and published him in *The Criterion*.) Today Dawson is practically unknown among most younger historians, even Catholic ones.

If Christopher Dawson's hope of a large and serious religious revival in the West should occur, he will certainly be honored as one of its greatest prophets. And, if the secularization of that culture continues apace, few historians will have explained that process with wider and more profound understanding.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Buddenbrooks and After

JOSEPH GERARD BRENNAN

Cases of thrombophlebitis may take the following course: the patient—in this case an eighty-year-old male in August 1955—may at first complain of a dragging pain in his leg (in this case, the left one), which at first he may dismiss as a touch of rheumatism. Difficulty in walking ensues, and the affected leg becomes noticeably swollen. A physician called to examine the leg orders the patient to bed. His belief that a thrombosis has occurred is confirmed by a specialist, and the patient is transferred from his local doctor's care to a hospital. There, with bed rest mandatory, anticoagulants are administered. The patient's family is advised that all may be well if the thrombosis is not a secondary symptom of a serious disorder that may be, though at present unperceived, the root cause of the disorder.

Efforts to reduce the inflammation are partially successful, but the patient may gradually weaken, though he is still able to read, write letters, and receive visitors. Two weeks from the onset of the thrombosis, the patient could be encouraged to sit up in a chair, but the effort may result in weakness, fainting, and collapse with precipitate drop in blood pressure. Transfusions and intravenous feeding may meet with little positive effect, the patient now periodically lapsing into unconsciousness. Toward the end, when it is clear that the patient is beyond medical aid, morphia may be administered to avoid further discomfort. The patient dies quietly in his sleep. Autopsy reveals an advanced sclerotic condition of the patient's arterial system. Cerebral arteries had not yet been affected, and death occurs before the patient's mental processes have begun to deteriorate.

Thus, the passing of Thomas Mann described by his daughter Erika in her memoir of her father's last year of life is written here in the manner of Mann's description of Hanno's death by typhoid in *Buddenbrooks*.

II

The author of *Buddenbrooks* did not allow hospitalization to interfere with his reading—Alfred Einstein's book on Mozart, for one—or with his business or personal correspondence. Erika records that her father had been carrying about with him an unfinished letter to a certain Herr Kassbaum, who had been one of Mann's classmates at Lübeck's Katharineum some sixty-five years or so before. The octogenarian Kassbaum had written to congratulate his distinguished classmate on the latter's eightieth birthday, an event celebrated with considerable commotion two months before at Mann's final home in Kilchberg, some ten miles down the lake from Zurich. Mann had misplaced Kassbaum's address among the materials he had taken with him to the hospital, and at last gave up finishing the letter, saying to Erika, "It's very unlike me to do this . . . Kassbaum—of course I remember him. What will the man think of me!"

Mann had reason to remember Kassbaum. He had used the name and school situation, if not the person of Herr Kassbaum, in *Buddenbrooks*. In the late chapter given over to one day in the school life of young Hanno Buddenbrook, sole fourth-generation representative of the once prosperous merchant family

✪ JOSEPH GERARD BRENNAN is professor emeritus of philosophy at Barnard College, Columbia University, and professor emeritus at the Naval War College. His books include *Ethics and Morals* and *Foundations of Moral Obligation: The Stockdale Course*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Lübeck (the old Hansa city is not named in the novel) we read that a certain Gottlob Kassbaum, "son of the unfortunate merchant P. Philipp Kassbaum," received a good mark from his teacher in class recitation "despite the late distressing circumstances of his family." It seems that Kassbaum's father had been found guilty of falsifying bills of exchange. But his son had correctly identified the respective numbers of sheep, camels, oxen, asses, and servants of the biblical Job, the man from Uz. But Hanno, who hated school from the bottom of his heart, was marked down that day.

III

Buddenbrooks numbers nearly as many years as the twentieth century. The twenty-five-year-old author finished writing the bulky short-chaptered novel in 1900, having worked on it off and on for two and a half years, much of it while living with his brother Heinrich in Italy. Thomas sent the manuscript in its only copy to Samuel Fischer, publisher, with whom Mann had a long relationship, profitable to both parties. At first, Fischer wanted the big manuscript severely cut, but the young author refused to do this. Eventually Fischer gave in, and the first one thousand copies appeared in two softcover volumes at six marks each, a high price for a book in those days. Sales were slow at first, but they rose sharply with the cheaper one-volume edition that followed.

In *A Sketch of My Life* (1930) Mann gives the date of the original publication of *Buddenbrooks* as 1900 with an imprint of 1901, while his English language translator, Helen Lowe-Porter, says the date was 1902. But the record shows that the first thousand copies appeared in October 1901. Sparked by the cheaper one-volume printing of 1902, *Buddenbrooks* quickly climbed to high popularity in Germany, where it is still the one book of Thomas Mann to be found in nearly every German middle-class home, though, to younger generations, Thomas Mann's works may seem a little grandfatherly *(altväterlich)* in their high formality. The million-copy mark was reached by December 1930 and quickly surpassed, with comparable heavy printings in translation in most major European countries. To date, three film versions of *Buddenbrooks* have been done in Germany: the first in 1923, the second in 1959 with separate editions for East and West Germany. The third appeared as a television film serial shown with an English-dubbed sound track in 1984 on American public television.

Alfred A. Knopf published *Buddenbrooks* in New York in 1924 with the English translation by Helen Lowe-Porter. Many reprints followed. In 1961 Knopf brought out a softcover Vintage edition that sold 170,000 copies when it was reissued to tie in with the television series. Conservative estimates of the total sales of *Buddenbrooks* in the U.S. to date in all formats amount to something more than half a million copies.

IV

Most first readers of the English-language translation of *Buddenbrooks* took the translator "H. T. Lowe-Porter" to be a man. Most British reviewers thought she was English or at least a disciple of Henry James. Helen Lowe-Porter was born in 1877 in Towanda, Pennsylvania. On graduation from Wells College in Aurora, New York, she traveled to Europe for further study and opportunities to do translations, for she was competent in several languages and particularly fluent in German, French, and Italian. Married to the Oxford paleographer Elias Lowe, the translator settled in Princeton when her husband was elected to the Institute for Advanced Study. Lowe-Porter served as Mann's translator for thirty years, during which time she turned nearly all his major works into English. She thought *Doctor Faustus* (1947) a flawed work, and declined to translate Mann's late short novel *The Black Swan (Die Betrogene)*, which she disliked. Lowe-Porter died in 1963 at age eighty-six.

Many scholars and reviewers have scolded Lowe-Porter for her translations of Mann's works. David Luke has posted a list of her lapses in the introduction to his own translation of *Tonio Kröger* and other tales. Harry Levin strongly criticized her translation of *Doctor Faustus*. Apparently unaware that Mann had instructed her to make the cuts for the 1984 revised edition, Levin faulted her for omitting whole sections of the German original. He also expressed his displeasure at her choice of Old English equivalents of the ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tensive Luther-German passages in the original work. But it was the late Richard Winston, himself an expert translator as well as biographer of Thomas Mann, who produced the most remarkable evaluation of Lowe-Porter's translations of Mann's novels and tales. At the Rutgers University celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of Mann's birth (1875), Winston handed out sheets containing an alarming list of errors from Lowe-Porter's translation of *Doctor Faustus*, then surprised his audience by stating that, for all her lapses, Lowe-Porter's translations of Thomas Mann, taken as a whole, constitute an important independent body of work, an autonomous achievement of large dimensions that stands as a world in itself.

From the very beginning of *Buddenbrooks*, Lowe-Porter had to deal with dialect. In her 1924 translator's note to the novel, Lowe-Porter says:

> The translation of a book which is a triumph of style in its own language is always a piece of effrontery. *Buddenbrooks* is so leisurely, so chiselled: the great gulf of the war [the First World War] divides its literary method from that of our time. Besides the author has recorded much dialect. This difficulty is insuperable. Dialect cannot be translated.

At the opening of the novel we hear Grandfather Johann's impatient query to little Tony Buddenbrook, compounded of low German and French, "je, den Düwel ook, c'est la question, ma très chére demoiselle." When we meet the first great representative of four generations of Buddenbrooks, the old burgher has broken in on the stammerings of his little granddaughter as she tries to remember the next line of her Luther catechism—"Yes, what the devil does come next . . . my very dear Miss?" The question in two tongues itself tells a story. During the time frame of the larger part of the Buddenbrooks chronicle, Germany was still a patchwork of separate states, duchies, principalities each with regional speech, dialect, and accents as well as differences in language, style, and social classes, particularly in those interchanges of conversation between the working class or servants and the affluent bourgeoisie who employed them. In addition, the north-German Hansa city of Lübeck—at that time still a commercial port to be reckoned with—received many visitors from other German states or from abroad. The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer's father, merchant of the Hansa city of Danzig, did business with English firms, spoke the language, affected British tweeds—all of which did not prevent his decline into pessimism, melancholia, and eventual suicide. He could have passed for a Buddenbrook.

The commodious old Buddenbrook house entertained many visitors from all over nineteenth-century Germany—Baltic, West Prussian, Swabian, and Bavarian are only a few of the regional speeches heard at the richly loaded Buddenbrook dinner table, and Mann makes the best of their comic side. When Pastor Matthias from Cannstatt asks the servant girl Trina if she loves "the Master" ("Liebscht den Herrn?"), the poor girl wonders whether he is referring to Johann Buddenbrook or his son Thomas and timidly asks if the Herr Pastor means the old one or the young one ("Wekken meenen S'denn? den Ollen oder der Jungen?"). Mann's ear for Bavarian dialect set the soberest burghers to gentle thigh slapping when they read of the arrival at the Buddenbrook house on Meng Street of Alois Permaneder, hop merchant from Munich ("Himmi Sakrament!") destined to be Tony's second husband. Trina preceded him by rushing to tell the Frau Consul, Johann's wife, that there is a gentleman at the door whose speech she cannot understand—"Je, Fru Kunsel . . . doar wier 'n Herr, öäwer hei red' nich dütsch un is ook goar tau snaksch. . . ."—translated by Lowe-Porter as "Oh, Frau Consul . . . there's a gentleman, but he doesn't speak German and he do go on so. . . ." Ushered into the landscape room to receive a polite welcome from Frau Consul Buddenbrook, fat little Permaneder seats himself, puffing and looking about him with approval, "Ös tuats enk leicht!" which Frau Consul does not understand—Lowe-Porter gallantly translating as "You've got it good here!"

The problem of translations is vexing indeed, and Lowe-Porter herself sums up the matter by citing the too-familiar words of the French critic comparing translations to women, "When they are faithful, they are not beautiful, and when they are beautiful they are not faithful." But, in the case of *Buddenbrooks*, at least, does it really make much difference to the enjoyment of the reader who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has no German? More than one stern critic has conceded that it does not, since the sheer substance of Mann's Lübeck novel breaks easily through the barrier of nearly any language other than the one in which the talented son of Johann Heinrich Mann, merchant, wrote it down.

V

Buddenbrooks' great drama of a family's decline and fall is explicitly played out in the character and fate of Tony's brother, Thomas Buddenbrook, merchant and senator, head of family and firm's third generation. Omens of his eventual downward slide appear early in the novel. A great dinner celebration introduces the reader to the Buddenbrook family, gathered with friends around the richly heaped dining table in the fine old house bought by old Johann Buddenbrook, father of Consul Johann, for himself and his family. Conversation at dinner reveals that this very house was built by Dietrich Ratenkamp, merchant, just as his firm was nearing the peak of prosperity. "Sad," murmurs the consul, old Johann's pious son who is now head of the firm of Buddenbrook, "Sad that the [Ratenkamp] firm broke down in the last 20 years." For thirty seconds, family and dinner guests muse on the rise and fall of those who built and lived in this fine house until losses and failure forced them to leave it. The older diners agree that Ratenkamp made a big mistake when he took on one Geelmaack for a partner. But suppose he had not? Would it have made any difference? Probably not, says Consul Johann, sounding unaware the Schopenhauerian leitmotiv of the unity of character and fate. "That was the way his destiny was to be fulfilled. . . . He acted under pressure of inexorable necessity." Old Johann Buddenbrook, child of the Enlightenment, quickly checks this bit of metaphysical fatalism. "Assez, Jean! That's one of your idées."

Later, before going to bed, father and son discuss a letter from old Johann's eldest son, Gotthold, alienated from the family because he "married a shop." According to the letter, Gotthold believes he is being done out of part of his rightful inheritance, one-third of what his father paid for his fine house, and demands immediate payment. After prayerful consideration and some fast countinghouse mental arithmetic, Consul Johann Buddenbrook finds himself in conscience unable to recommend that his father pay the sum to the embittered Gotthold. Yet it was a hard decision, fraught with apprehension:

> This bitter feud with my own brother, with your oldest son, is like a hidden break in the building we have erected. A family should be united, Father. . . . It must keep together. A house divided against itself will fall.

Years later, Consul Johann Buddenbrook made his own terrible error of judgment. Believing wart-nosed Bendix Grünlich, merchant, a suitable match for his daughter Antonie, he forced the loyal simple-hearted girl to marry a man who, as a suitor, concealed his impending bankruptcy. The consul was blind to the fact that Grünlich was marrying his daughter for money, though Grünlich's cooked account books and faked references would hardly have fooled the youngest apprentice in the Buddenbrook office.

Eighty thousand marks flowed out of the coffers of the Buddenbrook firm for Tony's dowry, never to return. True, at the time, the company could easily sustain the loss. But when, on the death of the consul, son Thomas becomes head of the business, showing every promise of leading it to peaks of profit by his managerial skill, deeper cracks begin slowly to move toward the surface. These fissures form the outward manifestation of tensions, at first hardly noticeable, later unbearable, within the riven soul of clever, elegant Thomas Buddenbrook.

One morning, the widowed Frau Consul reads her son Thomas a letter from his sister Tony written on her first visit to Munich. After complaints about the Bavarian capital's queer dialect and slovenly ways, she adds, "and then the Catholicism. I hate it, you know. I have no respect for it." Tom laughs at this evidence of his sister's amiable simplemindedness, but his mother is not amused:

> Yes, Tom, you are laughing. But it pleases me very much that she holds fast to the faith of her fathers. . . . I know that you felt a certain sympathy for the papal church while you were in France and Italy: but that is not religion in you, Tom—it is something else [*etwas anderes*] and I understand what.

But does the Frau Consul really understand this "something else," so deep-rooted and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

manifold in him, so productive of tensions that will ultimately kill him when he should be at the height of his powers? Thomas Buddenbrook is no Catholic; his mother is right on that point, even though her son prefers the Catholic nuns to the Protestant sisters who come to attend dying Buddenbrooks. Late in the tale, the narrator tells us that Thomas Buddenbrook is a born Protestant, "full of the true Protestant's relentless sense of responsibility." Like Kierkegaard, Thomas is unconsciously convinced of the awful solitude of the human standing before God, separated by a gulf that the finite mortal cannot cross. Tom has all the true Protestant's inwardness *(Innerlichkeit)*, an interior sense that in his case leads him to grasp the truth that there is no hard wall separating inner character and outer accident. He knows that after his brilliant beginning as head of the house of Buddenbrook the slow creeping decline in the fortunes of the firm are but the outward manifestation of an inner lack of confidence in himself.

Tom's inward perception is all one with his fear of being destabilized by forces outside of him, by objective factors that correspond to subjective elements present in him but so suppressed that the outside world can see only the charming, elegant persona. Tom's disproportionate rage at his brother Christian's eccentricities springs from inward knowledge that what Christian is, he—Thomas Buddenbrook—has suppressed in himself. That is why Christian's preoccupation with his own peculiar sensations, the leg rubbing, the swallowing difficulty, his interest in these somatic quirks combined with his utter unsuitability for business, together with his passion for the theater and a good time, constitute an ever-present threat to his brother Tom's stability. Crazy as he is, Christian knows this; it is shown by his powerful response to Thomas's rage-distorted face at the height of their quarrel immediately after the death (it was a hard one) of the Frau Consul:

> You have made a position for yourself in life and there you stand, and push everything away which might possibly disturb your equilibrium for a moment—for your equilibrium is the most precious thing in the world to you. But it isn't the most precious thing in life, Thomas, no, before God, it is not.

Christian is perceptive, but so is Thomas. In an earlier conversation with the young head of the firm, his sister confided to him that sometimes she finds Christian "a little strange. . . . He goes on so unnaturally into detail." Tom quickly diagnoses Christian's oddity for her as something rooted in "exaggerated self-preoccupation," a trait all the more clear to him, Thomas, since he himself once was tempted to indulge in it until he realized that, for him, at least, control, equilibrium, suppression of all that is irregular and suspect stand as supreme personal and corporate values. True, he concedes to Tony, there are exceptional beings among those who are occupied by what goes on inside themselves:

> There will always be men who are justified in this detailed observation of their own emotions, poets who can express with clarity and beauty their privileged inner life, and thereby enrich the emotional world of other people.

But when Tom adds that "simple merchants" have other things to get on with, including himself in that class, he is wrong on the second count. Tom is not a simple merchant. He knows it, and his wife, Gerda, knows it. At one point, Tom mentions to sister Tony something that Gerda had said to him about his eccentric brother, Christian, for whom she has a certain sympathetic understanding. "There is nothing of the burgher about Christian, Thomas, he is even less of a burgher than you are yourself." Out of loyalty to her brother and to family tradition, Tony protests, but Thomas knows what his wife means. Years before, his choice of Gerda Arnoldson for a wife showed early on the "something else" in his nature that his mother had spotted beneath his sometime interest in the Roman church. Gerda is "different," standing aloof from her husband's family and social affairs. Her beauty strikes the solid citizens of the town as "strange" and, as Galsworthy remarks about the somewhat similar Irene in his Forsyte chronicle, "Where beauty is, things never run quite straight."

Gerda has her violin, a Stradivarius, and the only close acquaintance she makes in the merchant town is Lieutenant von Throta of the army garrison, who comes regularly with his cello to the house Thomas Buddenbrook has built for himself at a cost of a hundred

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thousand marks. (He has not heeded the warning of the Turkish saying, "When the house is finished, Death comes.") The lieutenant, too, has "something else" in his nature that does not quite go with his military profession. The pair play their music behind closed doors, the long intervals of silence between numbers driving Thomas Buddenbrook to extremes of jealousy that only his little Hanno can understand. To his father, as someone who suffers, Hanno responds—but not to his father as businessman. Hanno himself will never be a businessman. It is not only business or school or family expectations he fails to comprehend; it is life itself he does not respond to. Life is too strong, its demands too harsh for his fragile health and spirit. To use Settembrini's epithet for Hans Castorp in *The Magic Mountain*, Hanno is a *Sorgenkind*, a "delicate child of Life." The entrepreneurial ethic has no place in his cosmos.

VI

The Buddenbrooks had always prided themselves on their ethical conduct in business. "My son, attend with zeal to thy business by day, but do nothing to hinder thee from thy sleep at night," stands as the ethical imperative of the firm. Before writing the Lübeck novel, Thomas Mann drew up a detailed operational plan that included meticulous research into the generational background of the firm his father headed—its historical character, vicissitudes, losses, anniversaries, windfalls, scandals, decline, and fall. From his sister Julia, the young author extracted information about Elizabeth Mann (née Marty), whose son-in-law, the insurance executive Guido Gierman, had been convicted of fraud. In *Buddenbrooks*, the insurance man figure appears as Director Hugo Weinschenk, husband of Tony's daughter Erika by the bankrupt Grünlich. Weinschenk, the director of a fire insurance company, used his knowledge of certain fires to transfer insurance to companies other than his own before the news of the fires had broken. Thomas Buddenbrook explains the trick to his uncomprehending mother, the Frau Consul:

> Why, my dear Mother. . . . In the modern style of doing business, there is a thing they call usance . . . a sort of manoeuvre, not exactly open and aboveboard, something that looks dishonest to the man in the street, yet perhaps quite customary and taken for granted in the business world: that is usance. The boundary between usance and actual dishonesty is extremely hard to draw. Well, if Weinschenk has done anything he shouldn't, he has probably done no more than a good many of his colleagues who will not get caught.

Whether or not the term *business ethic* is an oxymoron, Thomas's eccentric brother Christian will have it that "every business man is a swindler." He passes the remark at the Harmony Club in the presence of a number of local and professional men of the Hansa city, a remark poor Christian later insisted was a joke. Joke or not, Herman Hageström, business rival of the Buddenbrooks, responded loftily, "For my part, I have the greatest respect for my calling." Thomas Buddenbrook rages at his brother:

> Every business man is a swindler? You, a business man yourself, belonging to a firm that strains every nerve and muscle to preserve its perfect integrity and spotless reputation!

Tom's father, pious Johann Buddenbrook, had to deal with the gross business deception in which his son-in-law, Tony's husband, Bendix Grünlich, merchant, played the villain, using his marriage into the Buddenbrook family to cover his losses. After examining the books that Grünlich had fiddled with to hide the true state of his affairs, old Johann gets right to the point: "If I am asked as a merchant to say frankly what I think, I am obliged to say that if the situation is that of an unfortunate man, it is also in a great degree that of a guilty man." Yet, allowing for the difference in scale between offenses, Johann Buddenbrook doesn't mind cutting a small corner here and there. On the day of his daughter's marriage to this same Grünlich, Tony's father quietly hands some laces to his son-in-law as the married pair boards the carriage at the start of the wedding trip, "You take a little under your overcoat, don't you? This excise—one has to get round it the best one can."

The really great central drama of moral decision is played, and played well, by Thomas Buddenbrook. The temptress is sister Tony who catches her brother, head of the firm and now senator of the old Hansa city, in one of his now-frequent moods of depression,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in part brought on by the downward slide of the firm's credit and profits. Tom knows this decline is but the outward sign of his inner loss of confidence. Tony has just returned from a stay at Pöppenrade with a former schoolfriend whose husband, Ralf von Maiboom, is threatened with bankruptcy, the result of gambling and other debts. The Mecklenburg noble is prepared to sell his entire grain crop "in the blade" at a price that would return twice that to the buyer at harvest time. Such a transaction would be entirely out of line with the ethical traditions of the Buddenbrook firm. Father Johann, now with God, would never have touched such an offer: that is not an affair of a little harmless lace smuggling, it is a covert betrayal of the standards and values of the firm. But after agonizing alone far into the night, Thomas Buddenbrook, pressed by creditors, whispers into his pillow, "I'll do it!"

He does it, and pays for it. In the middle of the fête commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the Buddenbrook firm, Tom, white-faced with nervous fatigue, hears a patter of hail outside. Shortly after, a telegram comes with the news that the entire Pöppenrade harvest has been destroyed in the blade. "That little bit of hail!" Thomas moans. Soon afterwards Thomas Buddenbrook suffers a mortal stroke following a botched tooth extraction. On his way home from the dentist, he falls in the street, his fine tailored clothes covered with mud. It is useless to consider passing leadership of the firm to teenage son Hanno, fourth and last representative of the Buddenbrook generations that are chronicled. Hanno's love for music is all one with his giving himself over to death. Progress of his typhoid infection is meticulously traced by the author; Thomas Mann consulted a physician to get it right.

Suffused as it is with the melancholy pessimism Mann believed endemic in the bourgeois patrician class long gone, *Buddenbrooks* ends on a note of hope and survival. After Hanno's death, Tony Buddenbrook, now fifty, stands with Friederike (daughter of the alienated Uncle Gotthold) and some others, mourning the loss to firm and family. "There will be a reunion," says Friederike. But Tony has doubts about that "even though religion teaches it is so." Little humpbacked Sesemi Weinbrod, for many years governess to the Buddenbrook children, will have none of Tony's doubts. She stands like a prophetess, looking at them all with a challenge in her eyes: "It *is* so!" she says.

Thus the close of *Buddenbrooks* corresponds to the final scene of Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*. In that moment the schoolboys are preparing to leave after little Ilusha's funeral. One of the boys asks the saintly Alyosha if he believes, as religion teaches, in an afterwards—and that all of us shall see each other again. With laughing enthusiasm Alyosha assures him that of course we shall meet again, "and we shall tell each other everything!"

VII

Thomas Mann was fascinated, says critic Margaret van der Pitte, with the fact that the businessman

> like the artist (like the human being) has a light and a dark side, honour bound by the Protestant work ethic, yet wedded to profit and exploitation as on a utilitarian account. And in either case severed by his account books from life.

In the novella that followed *Buddenbrooks*, Mann's *Tonio Kröger* (1903), the central character Tonio, a hardier Hanno, survives and succeeds in his vocation—he will be a renowned writer of imaginative literature. For all the ache of Tonio's alienation from "life," whether objectified in the heritage of his father's merchant tradition, or a boyhood friend, Hans Hansen, or a girl, Ingeborg Holm (blonde and blue eyed), Tonio manages to get the best of both worlds. He achieves "in despite" of it all, as Nietzsche would have it. The orderly tradition of his merchant ancestors gives Tonio "the bourgeois compulsion to finish things" that Thomas Mann used to explain his own diligent beavering to finish each of his long shelf of books, fiction or criticism. Tonio fancies that his impulse to artistic creation comes from his music-loving mother; her origins are southern, corresponding to Mann's own mother, Julia Da-Silva Bruhns, who was born in Rio de Janeiro and loved music.

A similar dualism illumines the background of Gustav von Aschenbach, tragic hero of Mann's plague-novella *Death in Venice* (1911), a tale mounted in a formal, solemn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

style that stands in contrast to its problematic subject, the homoerotic attraction of an aging writer to a handsome lad at a Venetian resort hotel. Aschenbach's ancestors were not businessmen, but hardworking government officials, upright clergymen. True, there is an exception, a Bohemian musical conductor who may have introduced a touch of artistic creativity into the writer's lineage. Conflict of stern discipline and the creative impulse produces a fight to the death within Aschenbach as he struggles to free himself from the spell cast over him by the beautiful Tadzio.

The Magic Mountain (Der Zauberberg) was begun in 1912 and finished in 1924, with a three-year time-out for the war years and for writing the wartime essays that made up *Reflections of a Non-Political Man* (1918). The big sanatorium novel presents yet another merchant-son hero who, unlike Tonio Kröger, seems more aware of the bad things in the entrepreneurial ethic than the good. Hans Castorp, too, comes from a north-German background, his native city Hamburg less than an hour's ride from Lübeck. Hans looks like a standard product of the commercial Free City, but he too turns out to have a little "something else" in his nature—more than a little, it seems, for soon after he arrives at the Davos tuberculosis sanatorium to visit his cousin, a patient there, he comes down with a lung infection himself and begins to say strange things. Down in Hamburg he respected work even though he did not like it, for the simple reason that work did not agree with him. Under the hermetic influence of the mountain cure, he confesses to a distaste he would never have admitted to down in the Flatland, a profound uneasiness with the entrepreneurial ethos. To Hans, *business ethics* is a contradiction in terms. To his friend and self-appointed tutor at the sanatorium, Ludovico Settembrini, Hans confides that those families he knew "down there" in Hamburg seemed to be concerned with no value higher than profit—they judge a man simply by how much money he makes. "Looking at it from this distance," he tells Settembrini, "I find it pretty gross. It is a cruel atmosphere down there, cruel and ruthless." Although Hans is a thorough civilian, he admires both person and vocation of his cousin, officer candidate Ziemmsen, who is his fellow patient:

> I have some understanding and sympathy for a military life. It has such an infernally serious side to it, sort of ascetic. . . . The military always has to reckon on coming to grips with death. . . . What I mean is that service in the army—service is the right word—isn't performed for commercial advantage nor for the sake of the economic doctrine of society.

VIII

Of *Buddenbrooks*, two sections only may convey to the watchful reader that the novel is the work of a young man and not that of a sixty-year-old Nobel Prize winner. One segment, the longest in this novel of short chapters, describes Thomas Buddenbrook's Schopenhauer epiphany. The other, in lighter vein, recounts Gerda Buddenbrook's winning over of Edmund Pfühl, the music master who accompanies her violin playing at the piano, to the music of Richard Wagner. Both chapters were fired by Mann's youthful passion for two of three divinities of his young manhood—Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche. Mann's enthusiasm for Schopenhauer may have receded in time, but the power of Richard Wagner over Mann's emotional life lasted until the end. Nietzsche has no separate segment in *Buddenbrooks*, although Mann was up to the eyes in the philosopher well before writing the novel. Nietzsche was reserved for *Tonio Kröger* to serve as an implicit presence in the novella; like Nietzsche, Tonio was called to knowledge, not born to it. In his creative work, Mann withheld full acknowledgment of his debt to the prophet of Sils-Maria until he sat down to write the mournful Nietzsche novel of his seventies, *Doctor Faustus* of 1947.

In *Buddenbrooks*, not long after the centennial celebration of the firm he heads, Thomas Buddenbrook knows he is going to die. His business is failing, his wife has withdrawn into her music, and he knows that his son Hanno will never amount to anything even as a musician. So the Senator (his native city awarded him that honor) happens (as did his creator) to pick up a volume of Schopenhauer, the part of *The World as Will and Idea* that Schopenhauer added later to the basic work finished when he, too, was a young man. Particularly appealing to Thomas Buddenbrook is the essay "On Death and Its Relation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the Indestructibility of Our True Nature," a metaphysical defense of old Epicurus's claim "Where we are, death is not, whether death is, we are not." The core of our true nature, says Schopenhauer, is not the personal self whose false sovereignty we guard so futilely; that self, as the sages of ancient India sing, is not real, but māya, illusion. Why should we hold tight this shadow citadel so fiercely, clinging in agony to our own personal ego in the face of its deserved annihilation? Now echoing the stoic Epictetus, Schopenhauer proclaims that it is not death we fear but the *idea* of death. Why torment ourselves with the belief that, when we die, the world will go on as it is without us? For the fearful, the philosopher of pessimism has soothing words:

> No question presents itself more naturally to knowledge, uncorrupted by the will, than this: an infinite time has passed before my birth; what was I during this time? Metaphysically, it might perhaps be answered "I was always I," that is, all those who during that time say "I" were always I.

Thomas Buddenbrook seizes on this passage for consolation, turning the metaphysician's words about the past into the future of the Self's, *his* self's, existence:

> Have I hoped to live on in my son? In a personality more feeble, flickering and timorous than my own? Blind, childish folly! What can my son do for me—what need have I of a son? Where shall I be when I am dead? Ah, it is so brilliantly clear, so overwhelmingly simple! I shall be in all those who ever, do ever, or ever shall say "I"—especially, however, in all those who say it most fully, potently, and gladly.

But the consoling vision of immortality that Thomas transforms into a metaphysical optimism far beyond Schopenhauer's intent hardly lasts the night, that night in which he sobs "I shall live!" into his pillow. Next morning he finds himself ashamed of his intimation of immortality, so unsuitable to a practical businessman of reputation. In less than two weeks he has forgotten all about it.

Richard Wagner had his Schopenhauer moment of luminous certitude just about the time Thomas Buddenbrook was having his. Frustrated in his attempts to get into bed with his Zurich neighbor Matilda Wesendonk, the composer came upon a volume of *The World as Will and Idea* and read large chunks of it. In a statement of high excitement he wrote to Liszt, "This philosopher is the first to make all clear to me!"—a cry tired Senator Buddenbrook echoes almost word for word ("Aber es ist so leuchtend klar"). Working at white heat on his Tristan poem, Wagner conflated his lovers' Sehnsuchtsmotiv with Schopenhauer's metaphysical longing of the World Will, and fired off a copy of his *Ring* poem to the old grouch in Frankfurt who found the whole thing rather indecent, particularly that business with Siegmund and Sieglinde ("Come to my arms, my sister-bride!").

The author of *Buddenbrooks* makes Senator Thomas's Schopenhaurian aperçu quite believable, one of the most moving things in the book. But that Edmund Pfühl, organist-composer, should be so quickly converted to the music of Richard Wagner is somewhat less credible. True, the tone of the set-piece Wagner episode, starring Gerda Buddenbrook and the old music master, is rather deliberately comic, suggesting the novelist's desire to keep his personal adoration for Wagner from spilling over too thickly into his tale. Pfühl's hero is Palestrina—not so much Bach whose music led to the victory of harmony over counterpoint. The organist's own compositions are "flawless, impeccable, full of the relentless severe logicality of the 'strict style' [Strenge Satz]"—a compositional method that will rise to central significance as the ideal creative method of Adrian Leverkuhn, the fictional Nietzsche composer of *Doctor Faustus*.

Pfühl plays a few bars of a transcription of *Tristan* that Gerda has sneaked onto the piano rack before her lesson, then jumps up in outraged protest:

> I cannot play that, my dear lady, I am your most devoted servant—but I cannot. That is not music—believe me! I have always flattered myself that I knew something about music—but this is chaos! This is demagogy, blasphemy, insanity, madness! This is a perfumed fog, shot through with lightening. It is the end of all honesty in art. I will not play it!

But Gerda quietly brings the old master around, and, before you know it, he has made an arrangement of the *Liebestod* for piano and violin and is banging out the overture to *Die Meistersinger* on Gerda's Bechstein to the silent wonder of listening Hanno, whose fas-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cination with Herr Pfühl's mobile Adam's apple almost equals his love for the music.

Neither Richard Wagner nor his music appears in Mann's later large novels, at least explicitly. In chapter 15 of *Doctor Faustus*, Leverkühn makes a semi-disguised reference to the prelude to the third act of *Die Meistersinger*. The composer is invoked together with Nietzsche (they are not named) at the end of the "Fullness of Harmony" section of *The Magic Mountain* at the point where Hans Castorp's musings on Schubert's lied "Der Lindenbaum" give way to the episode's conclusion, the narrator's descant on Romanticism:

> Ah, what power had this soul enchantment! We were all its sons and could achieve mighty things on earth insofar as we served it. One need have no more genius, only much more talent than the author of the "Lindenbaum" to be such an artist of soul enchantment as should give to the song a giant volume by which it should subjugate the world. . . . But its faithful son might still be he who consumed his life in self-conquest, and died, on his lips the new word of love which as yet he knew not how to speak.

Not in a novel but in the passion-filled *Abschied* "The Sufferings and Greatness of Richard Wagner" does Thomas Mann sum up all he believed he owed to the composer, to his love of that work, "as magnificently equivocal, suspect and compelling a performance as any in the world of art." The essay was delivered as a lecture at the University of Munich to an audience of five hundred intent listeners ten days after Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Mann declares that in his address he unconsciously bade farewell to Germany too—he left for Switzerland shortly afterwards, later for America and *Doctor Faustus*. It was the Munich address on Wagner that drew the disgraceful letter of protest, dated April 17, 1933, signed by Richard Strauss (to his eternal shame), Hans Pfitzner (to his as well), Max Amann, and nearly two score other worthies including a burgomaster, a president of the Chamber of Commerce, a sculptor, a director of the Bavarian State Opera, and a retired major-general.

IX

"He is homesick for the sea." Late in *Buddenbrooks*, Gerda is speaking to Dr. Langhals, who has succeeded old Dr. Grabow as the Buddenbrook family physician. Young Hanno has returned down in the mouth from four blissful weeks at Travemünde, the beach resort near Lübeck where the river Trave flows into the Baltic, which is today a short bus ride from the center of town. Four weeks of "sheltered peace and adoration of the sea" has not toughened the lad to face once more the scolding schoolmasters, the hated lessons. It was wonderful at Travemünde, a child's paradise. To lie on the beach with nothing to do but to "let your eyes rove idly and lose themselves in the green and blue infinite beyond,"—ah, this were *Kindheitsparadiese* enough for Hanno. He felt bitter returning to the rules and dates he must memorize for Herr Tierge's class. As the carriage with governess Ida Jungman takes him away from the beach, he can still see the Kurhaus, the Swiss cottages (the Mann family stayed in one of these), the yellow lighthouse tower. From the carriage he can see the local children playing, stopping to stare at him. "*They* can stay," he says to Ida, who comforts him. "Next year again, little Hanno," Ida replies, and those words are all he needs to let the tears run down his face.

Hanno's Aunt Tony best understands his longing for the sea and the blissful idleness of lying in the sand with no hated school tasks confronting him. For it was at Travemünde that Tony, as a pretty young girl of seventeen, fell in love for the only time in her life. Young Morten Schwartzkopf, son of the pilot-captain at whose house Tony is boarding, has asked her to wait for him until he has finished his medical studies at Göttingen, and she had said yes. But then that revolting creature with yellow side-whiskers from Hamburg popped up like a gingerbread devil denouncing invasion of his prior right as suitor for Tony's hand. At home under pressure from her father and in despair she had scrawled on impulse, "Betrothed this day, September 22nd, 1845 to Herr Bendix Grünlich, Merchant." Now she is a woman of fifty, twice divorced, with only one child who, grown to womanhood, is also destined to marry a crooked businessman. Comforting Hanno, Tony tells him that when she stayed at Travemünde, she thought she could preserve the pretty star of a jellyfish—but after spreading it out to dry, she found

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nothing but a big wet spot and a smell of rotten seaweed.

On the first page of his *Sketch of My Life,* the *Lebensabriss* of 1930, Thomas Mann makes the autobiographical connection clear: "The brightest hours of my youth were those summer holidays at Travemünde on the Baltic [Ostsee] bay with their mornings spent bathing from the beach, their afternoons, almost as passionately loved, by the steps of the bandstand opposite the gardens of the hotel." He did not let his theme of love of the sea rest with the Buddenbrooks. Aboard ship bound for Denmark, remembering his comic encounter with the police in Lübeck, Tonio Kröger muses:

> The sea opened out and he saw in the distance the beach where he as a lad had been let to listen to the ocean's summer dreams; saw the flashing of the lighthouse tower and the lights of the Kurhaus where he and his parents had lived . . . the Baltic.

In *Death in Venice,* the sea-gaze motif widens to Schopenhauerian proportions, with a touch of Wagnerian *Liebestod* mingled in with a drop of romantic artist-philosophy:

> He let his eyes swim in the wideness of the sea, his gaze lose focus, blur and grow vague in the misty immensity of space. His love of the ocean had profound sources, the hard-worked artist's longing for rest, his yearning to seek refuge from the thronging manifold shapes of his fancy in the bosom of the simple and vast; and another yearning, opposed to his art; and perhaps for that very reason, a lure for the unorganized, the immeasurable, the eternal—in short, for nothingness.

On the beach, Aschenbach relaxes in his reclining chair, holding pen and traveling tablet in his lap, as the beautiful boy Tadzio crosses his line of vision. The aging artist will die of that beauty.

X

After his return from the United States in 1952 to take up final residence in Kilchberg, Switzerland, Thomas Mann made two last nostalgic visits to Travemünde. The first visit on May 10, 1953, was the subject of an attractive photospread and text "Eine Liebe fürs Leben" in the October 13 number of *ZEIT-magazin.* Mann, accompanied by his wife Katia, had arrived from Hamburg in a black limousine, talked to journalists in the Kurhaus, and posed for photographs, felt-hatted and ulster-clad, against the background of his *Kindheitsparadiese.* The second followed a reception at Lübeck in May of 1955 where the writer received from the burgomaster the award of Citizen of Honor of his native city. That last walk at Travemünde took place two weeks before Mann's eightieth birthday, on June 6, three months before his death.

In July 1955, Thomas Mann and his wife Katia were vacationing at the Dutch seaside town of Noordwijk. He had shortly before been decorated with the order of Orange Nassau and, with Katia, had sat over coffee for an hour with Queen Juliana of the Netherlands. The beach at Noordwijk under a sky of rare warm clarity drew Mann, like his own Aschenbach, to set up his beach chair on the strand to look out over the blue of the Baltic. He also had his writing material and pen with him. On July 18 (we have it from daughter Erika), Mann mentioned to his wife "a dragging pain" in his left leg—a bit of rheumatism perhaps. On July 20 he trudged back to their hotel, pleased with what he had written that morning—he had finished the introduction to the anthology *The Finest Stories in the World.* What he had set down about Billy Budd, Melville's "handsome sailor," particularly satisfied him. But he confessed to having had a hard time getting back over the sand to the hotel. "This stupid rheumatism. . . ."

But it was not rheumatism. The physician director of a local clinic examined the leg, now considerably swollen. He sent the writer to bed, leaving word that a second opinion, one from a Leyden specialist, would be helpful. On returning to his clinic, the doctor telephoned Katia: "Your husband has a thrombosis."

Thomas Mann died in the Cantonal hospital of Zurich, August 12, 1955. His Nobel Prize diploma, now framed on a wall of Zurich's Thomas Mann Archive, praises a life's achievement in letters. Professor Böök of the Stockholm prize committee (he considered *The Magic Mountain* "an artistic monstrosity") insisted that certain words appear in the beautifully lettered document: "Above all, *Buddenbrooks.*"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bean Soup: or A Legume Miscellany

PHILIP PARADIS

Nobody there is that doesn't love a bean.
If not the royal navy bean, then the wax bean,
the soybean, the green bean, the black bean—the
pot is large, it contains multitudes—white bean,
pink bean, small red bean, the lowly pinto,
the lovely lentil—let the lamp affix its bean—
the walnut-shaped garbanzo, large lima bean, baby lima,
(a reunion of the Bean families is here assembled),
the cranberry bean, white kidney bean, northern bean,
or their cracked cousins: green split pea, yellow
split pea, and ol' black-eye. A lineup
of likely legumes. Gather ye bean pods
while ye may. Go and catch a falling bean
and if you catch one, let me know.
A man and a woman are one. A man and a woman
and a bean are one, or two, or three.

The beans I mean, no one has seen them made
or heard them made, but at suppertime
we find them there. Come live with me,
and eat some beans and we will love
within our means. One could do worse
than be an eater of beans.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's bean?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Had we but world enough, and time,
this coyness, Lady, were no crime.
But, at my back, I always hear
a pot of beans bubbling near.

Mark but this bean, and mark in this,
how little that which thou deny'st me is.
An aged bean is but a paltry thing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I must lie down where all ladders start,
in the foul rag-and-bean shop of the heart.
O my love is like a red, red bean,
that's newly picked in June:
O my love is like a pinto bean,
that's truly cooked at noon.

So much depends upon a red kidney
bean. You might ask, Do I dare
to eat a bean? Dry beans can harm no one.
They remind us of home sweet home,
home on the range,
home where the heart is.
Without expecting anything in return,
they give us protein, zip, and gas.
Add what you will—onion, tomatoes, red
pepper, chili powder, juice of lemon,
salt & pepper to taste. Add ham
hocks, bring to a boil, simmer slowly.
Call your friends, serve with
panache, crackers, and green salad.

How do I cook them? Let me count the ways—
boiling, steaming, frying, baking.
And if these verses may thee move,
Sweet Lady, come live with me
and be my love. And if this fare
you disapprove, come live with me
and please, be my cook.

✪ PHILIP PARADIS teaches creative writing at Northern Kentucky University. His poems have appeared in *Poetry, Southern Humanities Review, Poet & Critic,* and many other magazines. His most recent collection of poems is *Something of Ourselves,* published by Cedar Creek Press.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Journeys with Joseph Mitchell

WILLIAM ZINSSER

Every now and then, seeking to rid my thoughts of death and doom, I get up early and go down to Fulton Street Fish Market. I usually arrive around five-thirty, and take a walk through the two huge open-fronted market sheds, the Old Market and the New Market, whose fronts rest on South Street and whose backs rest on piles in the East River. At that time, a little while before the trading begins, the stands in the sheds are heaped high and spilling over with forty to sixty kinds of finfish and shellfish from the East Coast, the West Coast, the Gulf Coast and half a dozen foreign countries. The smoky riverbank dawn, the racket the fishmongers make, the seaweedy smell, and the sight of this plentifulness always give me a feeling of well-being, and sometimes they elate me. I wander among the stands for an hour or so. Then I go into a cheerful market restaurant named Sloppy Louie's and eat a big, inexpensive, invigorating breakfast—a kippered herring and scrambled eggs, or a shad-roe omelet, or split sea scallops and bacon, or some other breakfast specialty of the place.

Any Joseph Mitchell fan would recognize that opening paragraph as his and nobody else's: the plain declarative sentences, the leisurely accretion of detail, the naggings of mortality, and the promise of renewal through the sight and smell and grateful consumption of food brought from the sea by old-fashioned toil and cooked by old-fashioned methods. The title of the piece, "Up in the Old Hotel," is no less revealing of the author—a man drawn to old places and old people—and it also hints at a mystery. We are about to be taken on a journey.

These journeys with Joseph Mitchell, which ran in *The New Yorker* for more than a quarter of a century, from 1938 to 1965, were hugely influential on nonfiction writers of my generation—a primary textbook. They appeared with maddening infrequency, often two or three years apart. Sometimes I would ask friends who worked at the magazine when I might expect a new Mitchell piece, but they never knew or even presumed to guess. This was mosaic work, they reminded me, and the mosaicist was finicky about fitting the pieces together until he got them right. When at last a new article did appear, I saw why it had taken so long. It *was* exactly right.

Then, abruptly, everything stopped. After *Joe Gould's Secret*, in 1965, Mitchell didn't publish another word, though he continued to go to his *New Yorker* office, as he still does today, at eighty-four. What he has been writing is his own secret, as are his reasons for shutting the door on his career, refusing even to have his books reprinted. Only this year did he drop a clue, in an interview with the *New York Times*. "The luster of his best work became a kind of burden," the *Times* reporter wrote. "The past, which had always exerted a powerful pull on his imagination, exacted a kind of revenge as he grew older. His books and his reputation, he says, became 'an albatross around my neck.' "

One result was that Mitchell's work was unavailable by the early 1970s, when I became a writing teacher and wanted to pass him along to a new generation of students, believing that they would find in his writing—in his effortless style, his organization of enjoyable information, his humor and his humanity—much that they would need to know. Like all teachers who own the only copy in town of what they want to teach, I improvised, reading certain passages aloud, and over the years that introduction to Joseph Mitchell is what many students have especially thanked

✪ WILLIAM ZINSSER is the author of fourteen books, including *On Writing Well, Writing to Learn*, and, most recently, *American Places: A Writer's Pilgrimage to Fifteen of this Country's Most Visited and Cherished Sites.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me for. But because the work was out of print, the legacy was snapped, and I took to steering students to his closest heirs in the next generation: Calvin Trillin, Mark Singer, and Ian Frazier.

Now at last Joseph Mitchell has consented to be anthologized, his four principal books collected under one roof for the first time: *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon, Old Mr. Flood, The Bottom of the Harbor,* and *Joe Gould's Secret.* The anthology is called *Up in the Old Hotel* (Pantheon), and, again, the title struck me as apt, for as I opened the book I felt not unlike Mitchell himself and Louis Morino in that story, poking into the long-closed upper floors of Sloppy Louie's restaurant, which had once been a waterfront hotel for steamship passengers. I didn't know what ghosts I would rouse and what I would think of what I found.

The first half of the new anthology consists of *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon* (1943), the book about some marginal residents of downtown Manhattan that gave Mitchell his initial fame. For this collection he has added seven stories from the same period, including "The Mohawks in High Steel," his piece about the Caughnawaga Indian construction workers, remarkable for having no fear of heights, that Edmund Wilson used as the introduction to his book *Apologies to the Iroquois.* The table of contents—"King of the Gypsies," "Obituary of a Gin Mill," "Houdini's Picnic," "A Sporting Man"—is ample warning that Mitchell's interests didn't run to society's stable citizens, and the pieces themselves are still classic examples of writing about "ordinary" people without a tinge of condescension.

That achievement is at the heart of all of Joseph Mitchell's work—a matter of both craft and character. "Lady Olga" catches the ultimate humanity of one of nature's ultimate freaks, a bearded lady. "Mazie" is about the resident ticket-taker at a dime movie house called the Venice Theater—a celebrity on the Bowery because "she has a genuine fondness for bums" and probably knows more of them than anyone in the city; every day she hands out money to them. "On the Bowery, cheap movies rank just below cheap alcohol as an escape, and most bums are movie fans. They go into the Venice early in the day and slumber in their seats until they are driven out at midnight." Mazie once told the manager that movies with a lot of shooting were bad for business because "they wake up the customers."

Just as "Mazie" is both one person's story and the larger story of the Bowery, "King of the Gypsies" is both about Johnny Nikanov and about all New York Gypsies; Mitchell is so genuinely curious and so dogged a listener that he eventually gets it all—the whole culture as well as a representative individual:

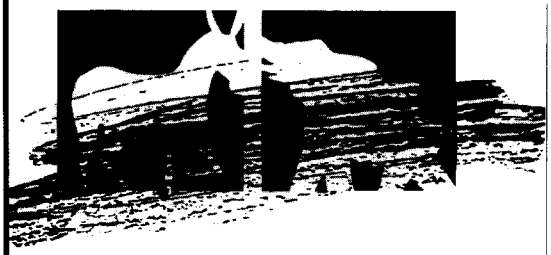
> They [gypsies] rent the cheapest flats in the shabbiest tenements on the worst blocks. Three or four families often share one flat. They move on the spur of the moment; in the last two years one family has given seventeen addresses to the Department of Welfare. They have nothing at all to do with gajo [non-gypsy] neighbors. Even the kids are aloof; they play stick- and stoopball, but only with each other. The children are dirty, flea-ridden, intelligent and beautiful; one rarely sees a homely gypsy child. They are not particularly healthy, but they have the splendid gutter hardihood of English sparrows.

"A gypsy gets to be a king by calling himself one," Mitchell writes, stating an outlandish fact in a sentence so simple that it goes by almost before we see how much it amuses him. Such deadpan sentences form a current of humor that runs through his work, and such is his control that nobody is patronized. He never pokes us in the ribs to notify us that something he has recorded is considerably odd; we are allowed the pleasure of realizing it on our own. Alternatingly, he uses his subjects' own words to supply a comic edge: "Johnny says that his gypsies are the poorest in the United States. 'If you was to turn them all upside down and give them a good shaking,' he says, 'you couldn't buy a quart of gin with what fell out.' " Mitchell has a sure ear for vernacular speech, and one of the pleasures of reading his work is to hear how engagingly Americans get things said in idiomatic and regional turns of phrase.

But a funny thing happened to me on the way back to *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon.* Though I still admired the craft, I wearied of the subject. Mitchell was writing about a world whose mother church was the Irish saloon, a time when drunks and bums were lovable and when garrulous moochers like Joe Gould were amusing. Today there's no such

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dirty politics, pi in the sky,



DIRTY POLITICS

Deception, Distraction, and Democracy

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON

"If you read this book—and you should—you will never again listen to a news broadcast or read a newspaper in the same way.... Impressively researched, clearly written and organized, and enlightening throughout."—Deborah Tannen, *The Washington Post Book World.* "Must-reading for those who want to be part of an informed electorate"—*Houston Chronicle.* "An illuminating primer about the dangerously subtle distortions of video politics"—*The Philadelphia Inquirer.* "Should be required reading for candidates and commentators alike"—*Booklist.* $25.00, 335 pp.

THE FACTS OF LIFE

Science and the Abortion Controversy

HAROLD J. MOROWITZ and JAMES S. TREFIL

"The women of America owe Professors Morowitz and Trefil a debt of gratitude.... Gives us a new perspective on the future of this debate. Fascinating"—Ann Stone, Republicans for Choice. "Admirably clear and concise.... They view *Roe's* trimester schedule as conforming very closely to what the most reliable scientific evidence suggests"—Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Washington Post Book World* (cover). $19.95, 179 pp.

PI IN THE SKY

Counting, Thinking, and Being

JOHN D. BARROW

"Mathematics has rarely found such a gifted and provocative exponent.... Rich in philosophical insights and literary allusions, this remarkable study will stimulate and challenge serious readers"—*Booklist.* "A brilliant summation of ideas about mathematics that shows a depth of scholarship and an analysis that will leave the reader more than a little shaken.... Caviar for the connoisseur"—*Kirkus Reviews.* $25.00, 317 pp.

Nominated for the National Book Award

THE PROMISE OF THE NEW SOUTH

Life After Reconstruction

EDWARD L. AYERS

"Impressive.... Extraordinarily interesting and well written.... A comprehensive overview of an important era, drawing on the best work of many historians"—*Library Journal.* "Forty years after the appearance of C. Vann Woodward's *Origins of the New South*, we have a work of comparable depth, breadth, strength, and power"—Joel Williamson. "A rare achievement, the kind of breakthrough book that moves a field onto a new plateau"—Jacquelyn Hall. $30.00, 572 pp.

Abby Ayers

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

At better bookstores. To charge, call 1-800-451-7556 (M-F, 9-5 EST)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and other facts of life

AMERICAN HOLOCAUST

Columbus and the Conquest of the New World

DAVID E. STANNARD

"Thoroughly documented...demolishes a score of historical myths...a searing account of what happened in the Americas after the arrival of Columbus. It is a stirring and troubling book"—Dee Brown, author of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. "Vivid and relentless, combining a formidable array of primary sources with meticulous analysis—a devastating reassessment of the Conquest as nothing less than a holy war"—*Kirkus Reviews*. $25.00, 345 pp.

GOT TO TELL IT

Mahalia Jackson, Queen of Gospel

JULES SCHWERIN

Aram Avakian

"A fine biography, and a valuable contribution to the too-sparse literature on gospel music"—*Kirkus Reviews*. "A memorable profile of a woman whose life and art epitomized the civil rights movement"—*Booklist*. "An intriguing glimpse into the life of an important figure in African American history"—*Library Journal*. $19.95, 204 pp.

THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF ROBERT MOTHERWELL

Edited by STEPHANIE TERENZIO

Hilton Kramer hailed Robert Motherwell as "the eloquent and articulate champion of the entire Abstract Expressionist movement." Here is the definitive collection of Motherwell's written work, nearly eighty pieces brought together for the first time, including sixteen essays, pieces from exhibition catalogs, more than a dozen public lectures, and all of Motherwell's vanguard editorial work—some never before published. $35.00, 416 pp.

LINCOLN, THE WAR PRESIDENT

Edited by GABOR BORITT

"Seven sterling essays that assess the nature of Lincoln's leadership as commander in chief. Written by an impressive constellation of historians, including five Pulitzer winners.... First-rate commentary by some of our finest historians"—*Kirkus Reviews*.

The contributors are James M. McPherson, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., David Brion Davis, Robert Bruce, Carl Degler, Kenneth Stampp, and Gabor Boritt.

$23.00, 272 pp.

THE ISLAMIC THREAT

Myth or Reality?

JOHN L. ESPOSITO

"A discerning and knowing book on a subject that has been the stuff of caricature and guess-work. It is a subtle book on the relation between Islam and political power. Judicious, careful, and written with verve and conviction"—Fouad Ajami. "A much-needed and highly accessible account of an ancient and widespread culture too often presented only in terms of villainous stereotypes"—*Kirkus Reviews*. "A brilliant tour de force by America's leading scholar of Islamic politics"—John P. Entelis. $22.00, 243 pp.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

At better bookstores. To charge, call 1-800-451-7556 (M-F, 9-5 EST)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing as a picturesque alcoholic, and homeless people on the sidewalks of our cities are a national shame and sorrow. Bums have lost their literary lovability. (So have hard-drinking writers.)

It's not Mitchell's fault that our perception of his chosen milieu has shifted after a half century of tumultuous social change and consciousness-raising. Nonfiction writers are captives of their given moment, and New York in the 1930s was still a small town; people knew their neighborhood bum. But I also couldn't help wondering how lovable all those drunks and bums and freaks were in the first place, or whether Mitchell romanticized them because they represented an American frontier type that he honored and perhaps even envied: the maverick, the outsider, the crazy individualist. Writers are in business to rattle the establishment, and Mitchell was only one of many *New Yorker* stars of his era who took loners and losers as their beat: the droll malefactors of St. Clair McKelway's "Annals of Crime," the raffish prizefighters of A. J. Liebling's boxing ring, the poetic dreamers of John McNulty's Irish bars.

I had the same problem with *Joe Gould's Secret,* the last of the four books collected here. Of all the half-mad misfits Mitchell met in a career that began as a young reporter on the *New York Herald Tribune* and the *New York World-Telegram* when he arrived from North Carolina in 1929—interviews that constitute his earliest book, *My Ears Are Bent*—no ear-bender held him in such thrall as Gould, a legendary Greenwich Village bohemian who claimed to be writing a book called "An Oral History of Our Time" that was already eleven times as long as the Bible. "Gould's life is by no means carefree; he is constantly tormented by what he calls 'the three H's'—homelessness, hunger and hangovers," Mitchell wrote in his first shot at Gould, a *New Yorker* profile and subsequent chapter in *McSorley's* called "Professor Sea Gull," so named because Gould cadged drinks by, among other things, doing sea gull imitations. He said he had translated many of Longfellow's poems into sea gull.

Returning to the subject twenty-one years later in *Joe Gould's Secret* (1964), Mitchell recapitulates the endless visits and monologues that the sea gull man inflicted on him. "I kept hoping that Gould would talk himself out," he recalls, "but the months went by and he showed no signs of doing so." One monologue lasted from 6:00 P.M. to 4:00 A.M. Even for a famously patient and courteous reporter, such forbearance goes well beyond normal limits, and it occurred to me, rereading this valedictory book, that Gould just plumb wore Mitchell out. Untypically, the book skates close to the edge of exasperation. Finally unburdening himself of Gould's secret, finally coming to terms with all that manipulative behavior and trying to maintain both Gould's dignity and his own, Mitchell may well have seen his whole professional life pass before his eyes, Gould being only the most tenacious of the hundreds of lost souls who trusted him to bear witness to their gallant but ultimately pathetic lives. It would be enough to give anyone terminal writer's block.

But lodged between the McSorley's book, in which Mitchell developed his craft, and the Gould book, in which he said good-bye to it, are two gems that have lost none of their brilliance. With *Old Mr. Flood* and *The Bottom of the Harbor,* Mitchell grew beyond his infatuation with eccentrics and became a matchless chronicler of plain people doing plain work with integrity. The two books, however, are not the brothers they might appear to be.

Originally, the slender *Old Mr. Flood* took the form of three pieces in *The New Yorker,* and the opening paragraph is a pure concentrate of Mitchell's style:

> A tough Scotch-Irishman I know, Mr. Hugh G. Flood, a retired house-wrecking contractor, aged ninety-three, often tells people that he is dead set and determined to live until the afternoon of July 27, 1965, when he will be a hundred and fifteen years old. "I don't ask much here below," he says. "I just want to hit a hundred and fifteen. That'll hold me." Mr. Flood is small and wizened. His eyes are watchful and icy-blue, and his face is red, bony and clean-shaven. He is old-fashioned in appearance. As a rule, he wears a high, stiff collar, a candy-striped shirt, a serge suit, and a derby. A silver watch-chain hangs across his vest. He keeps a flower in his lapel. When I am in the Fulton Street Fish Market neighborhood, I always drop into the Hartford House, a drowsy waterfront hotel at 309 Pearl Street, where he has a room, to see if he is still alive.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Like most old people, Mitchell goes on to say, Mr. Flood "feels best when he is around things that have lasted a long time," and the book takes its tremendous gusto from the old men's recollections of the pulse of the Fulton Market and the golden age of restaurants like Still's, which had "a white marble bar for the half-shell trade, and there were barrels and barrels and barrels of oysters stood up behind this bar, and everything was nice and plain and solid—no piddling around, no music to frazzle your nerves, no French on the bill of fare; you got what you went for."

So full of exact detail were these "stories of fish-eating, whiskey, death and rebirth," as Mitchell called them, that when *Old Mr. Flood* was published as a book, in 1948, I was startled to read the author's prefatory note, which said: "Mr. Flood is not one man; combined in him are several old men who work or hang out in Fulton Fish Market, or who did in the past. I wanted these stories to be truthful rather than factual, but they are solidly based on facts." (In the new anthology, he calls the book "fictional.") I felt slightly betrayed by that admission and didn't know what to make of such tinkering with the rules of my craft. I now see that Mitchell anticipated by several decades the "New Journalism" that writers like Gay Talese and Tom Wolfe were hailed for inventing in the 1960s, using fictional techniques of imagined dialogue and emotion to give narrative flair to works whose facts they had punctiliously researched.

I also suspect that the obvious pleasure of writing about the waterfront in *Old Mr. Flood* told Mitchell that he had found his true subject—a world of dignified work that he could examine in depth, with no fictional fooling around. The result was *The Bottom of the Harbor* (1960), which still strikes me as perfect—one of the best of all American nonfiction books.

The Bottom of the Harbor consists of six long articles that appeared in *The New Yorker* over the space of twelve years. These were the pieces that I once awaited with so much impatience. Beginning with "Up in the Old Hotel," they include "The Bottom of the Harbor," an anatomy of what's under the city's waters—everything living and dead, from fish and clams and oysters to long-sunken wrecks; "The Rats on the Waterfront," an enjoyable group portrait of the harbor's least enjoyable creatures; "Mr. Hunter's Grave," a visit with one of the oldest survivors of a nineteenth-century village of Negro oystermen on Staten Island; "Dragger Captain," the story of an old salt in the fleet out of Stonington, Connecticut, that supplies the Fulton Fish Market with flounder; and "The Rivermen," which is about the men of Edgewater, New Jersey, just below the George Washington Bridge, who fish the Hudson River for shad.

With this book the past becomes a major character in Mitchell's work, giving it a tone that is both elegiac and historical. Because the characters in *The Bottom of the Harbor* are mainly old men, they are custodians of memory, their stories a link with the history of a city that has always been mercantile at heart. My own family's shellac factory stood near the river on West 59th Street for well over a century—I'm a fourth-generation New Yorker—and I, too, was once a young reporter on the *Herald Tribune*, in love with the city and writing features about shad fishermen on the Hudson. My gratitude to Mitchell is therefore that of a native son. I got lucky that a man whose family has farmed in North Carolina since before the Revolutionary War came north, with his inborn respect for continuity and work, and caught my city's metabolism.

The mixture of themes in *The Bottom of the Harbor* is uniquely Joseph Mitchell's: specialized knowledge, pride of labor, enjoyment of the simple pleasures of the present, and mindfulness of the past and of the soon-to-be-joined dead. So organically are these themes woven through *The Bottom of the Harbor* that I could cite almost any page as evidence. One that comes to mind deals with the boats that take fishing parties out of Brooklyn's Sheepshead Bay. It comes to mind because my father spent his boyhood summers there, visiting his grandfather, who had been brought from Germany when *he* was a boy. Mitchell explains that there are hundreds of wrecks lying on the bottom of the approaches to New York harbor, some so close to shore that on sunny fall days it's possible to see schools of sea bass streaming in and out of their hulls, which provide shelter.

> Furthermore, [the hulls] are coated, inside and out, with a lush, furry growth made up of algae, sea moss, tube worms, barnacles, horse mussels, sea anemones, sea squirts, sea mice, sea snails, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scores of other organisms, all of which are food for fish. The most popular party boats are those whose captains can locate the fishiest wrecks and bridle them. Bridling is a maneuver in which, say the wreck lies north and south, the party boat goes in athwart it and drops one anchor to the east of it and another to the west of it, so that the party boat and wreck lie crisscross. Held thus, the party boat can't be skewed about by the wind and tide, and the passengers fishing over both rails can always be sure that they are dropping their bait on the wreck, or inside it. Good party-boat captains, by taking bearings on landmarks and lightships and buoys, can locate and bridle anywhere from ten to thirty wrecks. A number of the wrecks are quite old; they disintegrate slowly. Three old ones, all sailing ships, lie close to each other near the riprap jetty at Rockaway Point, in the mouth of the harbor. The oldest of the three, the Black Warrior Wreck, which shelters tons of sea bass from June until November, went down in 1859. The name of the next oldest has been forgotten and she is called the Snow Wreck; a snow is a kind of square-rigged ship similar to a brig; she sank in 1886 or 1887. The third one is an Italian ship that sank in 1890 with a cargo of marble slabs. Her name has also been forgotten and she is called the Tombstone Wreck, the Granite Wreck, or the Italian Wreck. . . . Several of these wrecks have been fished steadily for generations, and party-boat captains like to say that they would be worth salvaging just to get the metal in the hooks and sinkers that have been snagged on them.

So insistent is the tug of the past—of long-gone ships and long-gone people—that *The Bottom of the Harbor* ought to be lugubrious. But it has a certain prevailing merriment. Since Mitchell and his subjects regard death as a normal part of life, his book has none of the self-indulgence common to the work of journalists confronted with aging and mortality. It's not sentimental, or maudlin, or strenuously colorful. It's Dickens without tears.

"Invariably, for some reason I don't know and don't want to know, after I have spent an hour or so in one of these cemeteries, looking at gravestone designs and reading inscriptions and identifying wild flowers and scaring rabbits out of the weeds and reflecting on the end that awaits me and awaits us all, my spirits lift, I become quite cheerful," Mitchell writes in "Mr. Hunter's Grave," my favorite of all his pieces and the one I would commend to all nonfiction writers hoping to crack the secret. I still remember the exhilaration of reading it for the first time.

Mitchell meets the eighty-seven-year-old George H. Hunter—"one of those strong, self-contained old men you don't see much any more"—while exploring a settlement of dilapidated houses on Staten Island, called Sandy Ground, that has "an empty look, as if everybody had locked up and gone off somewhere." It's a relic of the oyster-planting business—a once-thriving community and a "garden spot"—founded before the Civil War by free Negroes from the Eastern Shore of Maryland and still inhabited by their descendants. Mr. Hunter, an elder of the African Methodist Church, spends an afternoon showing Mitchell around, and the day has the unhurried quality of actual time. Before it's over, Mr. Hunter, reflecting on the history of oyster farming in New York harbor, on the passing of generations in Sandy Ground, on families and family names, planting and cooking, wildflowers and fruit, birds and trees, churches and funerals, change and decay, has touched on much of what living is all about.

Near the end, in the old cemetery, not far from his own grave, he says: "To tell you the truth, I'm no great believer in gravestones. There's stones in here that have only been up forty or fifty years, and you can't read a thing it says on them, and what difference does it make? God keeps His eye on those that are dead and buried the same as He does on those that are alive and walking. . . . He knows the exact whereabouts of every speck of dust of every one of them. Stones rot the same as bones rot, and nothing endures but the spirit."

Back-room Boy

"I'VE SEEN THE BEST OF IT": MEMOIRS. *By Joseph W. Alsop, with Adam Platt.* Norton. $29.95.

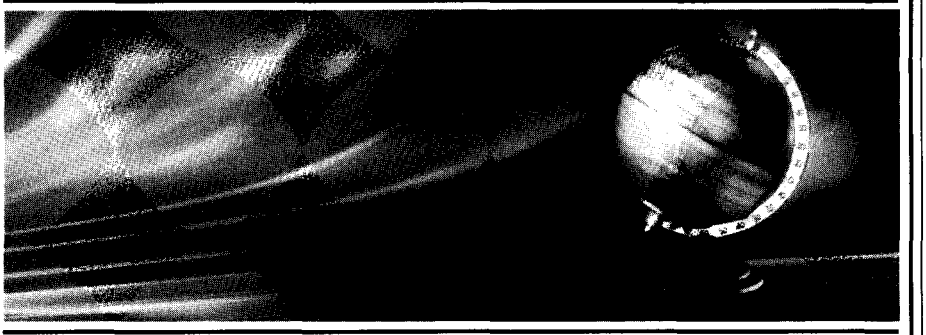
Reviewed by JUDITH MARTIN

High on the list of best things Joseph Alsop has seen (not to mention devoured) that the rest of us are unlikely to encounter is a terrapin course at dinner. A longstanding terrapin

JUDITH MARTIN is a novelist who also writes the "Miss Manners" syndicated column and books, including *Miss Manners' Guide for the Turn-of-the-Millennium.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANNOUNCING THE CREF GLOBAL EQUITIES ACCOUNT *for* SOUND RETIREMENT INVESTING



WE'VE PUT A NEW SPIN ON INVESTING WITH TIAA-CREF

At TIAA-CREF, our goal has always been to make your retirement dollars go farther. Now, they can go as far as London, Frankfurt or Tokyo—or anywhere else in the world where financial opportunities seem promising—with our new CREF Global Equities Account.

THE CREF GLOBAL EQUITIES ACCOUNT EXPANDS THE HORIZON FOR RETIREMENT SAVINGS.

The CREF Global Equities Account is an actively-managed portfolio of both foreign and domestic stocks selected for diversity and growth potential. As part of a wide range of annuity and investment alternatives already offered by TIAA-CREF, it can increase your ability to create a more balanced, well-rounded retirement plan. While returns may vary over time, the CREF Global Equities Account is based on CREF's already-existing strength and the long-term approach to investing that has made TIAA-CREF America's preeminent pension organization.

WHEN IT COMES TO FOREIGN INVESTING, WE'RE ON FAMILIAR GROUND.

We've been speaking the language of foreign investing for nearly twenty years. That's when we pioneered investing pension funds on an international level. All those years of research, market analysis and cultivation of regional contacts have given us special insight into the risks and rewards of today's global marketplace.

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT OUR NEW GLOBAL EQUITIES ACCOUNT.

The CREF Global Equities Account is offered through your TIAA-CREF retirement annuities, subject to the provisions of your employer's retirement plan. It is automatically available for TIAA-CREF Supplemental Retirement Annuities (SRAs).

To find out more about the CREF Global Equities Account or TIAA-CREF's other annuity and investment alternatives, send for our free brochure. Or call 1 800-842-2776.

You'll find that at TIAA-CREF, our world revolves around helping you build a secure and rewarding future.

TIAA CREF

Ensuring the future for those who shape it.℠

SEND FOR OUR FREE BOOKLET

The CREF Global Equities Account—A World of Opportunity and learn more about this exciting new CREF Account. Mail this coupon to: TIAA-CREF, Dept. QC, 730 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Or call **1 800-842-2776.**

Name (Please print)

Address

City *State* *Zip Code*

Institution (Full name)

Title *Daytime Phone* ( )

TIAA-CREF Participant ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

If yes, Social Security # – –

CREF certificates are distributed by TIAA-CREF Individual and Institutional Services. For more complete information, including charges and expenses, call 1 800-842-2733, ext. 5509 for a prospectus. Read the prospectus carefully before you invest or send money. ASC

© 1992 Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association/College Retirement Equities Fund.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

craze had already rendered the chief ingredient "close to extermination" in 1936, when young Mr. Alsop arrived in Washington to cover the Senate for the *New York Herald Tribune*, but the "few very rich houses" that competed for the services of itinerant terrapin cooks were open to him.

"This creature—halfway between a sea turtle and a land tortoise—was, to me, the greatest of American delicacies, and since it had inhabited the Maryland estuaries in great numbers, it became a staple of grand Washington dinner parties," he recalls in these posthumously published memoirs. He continues:

> Properly made (without cream sauce), terrapin appeared on the dinner table as an unctuous, even gelatinous stewlike dish, with the tenderest bits of the terrapin's meat plus its liver and the female terrapin's eggs all floating gently in an enormously rich sauce made by endlessly boiling down the broth derived from the rest of the terrapin, plus fresh butter in huge quantities, sherry and cayenne pepper. I don't know how to describe the taste except to say that although its aroma reminded one a bit of the way feet sometimes smell, it was absolutely delicious.

A quarter of a century later, when the brand-new President Kennedy unexpectedly dropped in on the senior columnist after making the rounds of the inaugural balls and complained that there was no one at the White House to feed him, Joseph Alsop produced a bowl of terrapin. It was the only food he had thought it necessary to stock for the inaugural festivities; there was "not so much as an egg in the house." His celebrated guest took one look, or perhaps one sniff, and promptly lost his appetite (except for "one last cup of unadulterated admiration," his host managed to notice—and, one gathers, to supply).

Symbolically, these memories ought to bracket the Alsop heyday, when politics was sometimes combined with more subtle pleasures. As an accomplished curmudgeon who remembered life before the invention of upper-class guilt, who claimed he could no longer identify members of Congress because they all started going to the same hairdresser, and who stopped attending church because modern translations of the Bible would put him in a temper all Sunday, the cultivated Mr. Alsop ought to have declared this separation of power and taste to be the end of civilization.

But wait. Joseph Alsop considered the Kennedy administration the happiest time of his life. It was also his last happy time. When it ended, "I had finally become an old man, frozen in the viewpoints of the past. The pleasures the young indulged in during the 1960's seemed to me strikingly unpleasurable. The work of the younger artists struck me as thoroughly ridiculous or boring or, more often, both. And the chatter of the newly fashionable writers and so-called intellectuals began to drive me mad."

It wasn't the vanishing turtles, after all, or even the appearance of tiresome people who might make a disapproving connection between terrapin consumption and terrapin disappearance. The luxury that sustained him was not on the table, but around it.

Having arrived in Washington during the administration of his Roosevelt cousins, with family connections to other major government figures and the skill of making friends that he had taught himself in prep school to overcome the disadvantages of being fat, unathletic, and oddly dressed, Mr. Alsop enjoyed the advantage of being socially acceptable at a time when his profession was not. He claims to have been the only reporter in Washington invited to Dine Out, an expression that had nothing to do with restaurants.

It was also a cozy time, before politicians had professional handlers or journalists observed professional distance. Joseph Alsop became accustomed to making his political weight felt in private as much as in public, and he apparently valued the former opportunities more. The columns he wrote and the congressional testimony he gave in his vigorous opposition to Senator Joseph McCarthy are presented as less of a triumph than the gentleman's blow he dealt by cutting the senator dead in a Capitol elevator.

"Chief back-room boy" was the way he described his function when he was in China during World War II, as an associate of General Chennault's and a friend of T. V. Soong's, on visiting terms with the Soong sisters (one of whom was Mme Chiang Kai-shek) and their factions, and on letter-writing terms with President Roosevelt. It remained the job he liked best.

When he knew in advance about the CIA's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deposing Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in Guatemala, and Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran, and about the Bay of Pigs, he wrote nothing. "This type of journalistic discretion—or complicity, if one prefers that word—was never fashionable and today would likely come under bitter attack," he acknowledges. "However, it was then—and it is still now—my conviction that if the leaders of the U.S. government decide that all the risks and perils of a major covert operation are required to further the interests of the United States, it is not the business of individual newspapermen to put professional gain over that of country."

The friendship that put President Kennedy on his doorstep on inauguration night was his last opportunity to be a back-room boy at the highest levels. At the time of his death in 1989, Alsop had only social influence left, not so much because life had changed but because his views with regard to official government policy had not. Adam Platt, a family friend whom he chose to put this book together from interviews, letters, and articles, explains frankly in an epilogue that Mr. Alsop's privileged access to those he covered and his loyalty to the Cold War opinions came to be seen as swaggering partisanship. Although journalistic socializing had become commonplace, and in a cruder, more businesslike way than the mere hints and contacts Mr. Alsop took from the table, he began to take on an air of old-fashioned impropriety. One simply did not go to Vietnam to dine with generals.

But there had been decades in which he used such advantages with impressive results. The Joseph Alsop of this book does not come across as a spoiled society gentleman who looks back upon his lost position with the boasting and bemoaning suggested in its bittersweet title. He may have entered journalism through his grandmother's decree and influence, but he pursued the career with feisty gusto.

For all his ostentatious fussiness, Mr. Alsop spent the better part of his career voluntarily trundling off to war. To be sure, he was always on the lookout for a good valet and some chair-bearers when he got there; but when that was impossible, when, for example, he was interned in a Hong Kong prison camp, he nevertheless managed to make himself cheerfully comfortable. He figures that he spent a total of two and a half years in Vietnam and considerable time in wartime Korea and China.

His best anecdotes show him cutting a ludicrous figure indeed, but nevertheless one pursuing the ideals of public service. The tone is high-handed, but not arrogant. He freely acknowledges numerous misguided pronouncements, grandly downplays his own hints that he may have influenced history, and gallantly allows that his brother and partner, Stewart Alsop, and his wife, Susan Mary Alsop, had good cause to remove themselves from his daily presence. His temper and his drinking are lightly, but frequently, noted. He admits the injustices practiced in his circles, even though he characterizes racism and a "limitation," anti-intellectualism as a "weakness," and anti-Semitism as being in the "mild, old-fashioned manner." And it is not Joseph Alsop's enemies who point out how much he enjoyed war.

The success of this book is that Joseph Alsop is able to present a way of life he knows to be considered distasteful in such a way as to explain why anyone found it delicious.

Death and the Maiden

DEAR DEPARTED: A MEMOIR. *By Marguerite Yourcenar. Translated by Maria Louise Ascher. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $25.*

Reviewed by ANN M. BEGLEY

Marguerite Yourcenar's genius was such that she had at her command an extraordinary range of literary genres. Yet her oeuvre often tends to resist classification. Poetry informs all of her work, without exception. Two of her novels were awarded prizes for excellence in expository prose, and—with considerable justification—she elected to include a volume of prose poems in the collection of her fiction. It is not surprising, then, to find that *Le labyrinthe du monde*, which the author has called a memoir and some have labeled an autobiography, is, in reality, a three-volume chronicle of her family lineage, replete with polem-

✪ ANN M. BEGLEY is the author of *Marguerite Yourcenar* and *Simone Weil*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ical commentaries, and in which the writer scarcely appears on stage at all.

In *Dear Departed,* the first volume of the trilogy to be translated into English, the reader is taken back to fourteenth-century Belgium and then led swiftly forward through generations of the bourgeois aristocracy—privileged, land-owning families, pausing now and again to view and ponder those of Yourcenar's forebears who arrest her attention. The writer lingers longest, as one might suspect, on the courtship and brief marriage of her parents, "already fissured by tiny cracks," in an era when marriage was looked upon as a commercial transaction and women "took care not to know too much about conception and parturition and would not have thought they could name the organs involved. Everything that touched on the center of the body was the province of husbands, midwives and physicians."

"It is very important," Yourcenar advised Maria Louise Ascher, whose fine translation this is, "that the reader not get the impression that the author is greatly or personally interested about her origins, since the whole quest is more sociological and historical than personal." She nevertheless dwells, on the very first page, on "the hopeless tangle of incidents and circumstances which to a greater or lesser extent shape us all," and in particular on "the being I refer to as me," "that girl-child, already fixed by the space-time coordinates of the Christian era and twentieth-century Europe." One is tempted to conclude that, just as a number of her fictive characters examined past events, ostensibly for other reasons but in reality in order to come to a better understanding of who and what they were, so, too, might Yourcenar's quest have been a dual one. Contrary to the expectations of some and the wishes of many, the book does not reveal the author's own story. However, the "I," which was so carefully eliminated from much of her writings, is either present or hovering in the wings. In any case, as the protagonist of her first novel, Alexis, remarks, "It is always of oneself that one speaks."

Very little is actually recalled. Rather it is through exhaustive research and impeccable scholarship that Yourcenar, née Marguerite de Crayencour, evokes a portrait of her maternal ancestors and the era in which they lived. For this reason her "memoir" has been compared to *Memoirs of Hadrian,* the book that first brought her the interest and respect of American readers. Scrupulous about the authenticity of details, the novelist spent years reading what the emperor had read and written, traveling where he had traveled, touching objects he had touched. Her scholarship is so highly valued that she has had the distinction of being included in the bibliographies of historical works. To attain what she terms "inner reality," she transported herself in thought into the body and soul of Hadrian to permit him to express himself, as much as it is possible, without an authorial intermediary.

In doing so, to be sure, Yourcenar goes further than the orthodox historian is willing to tread. Always seeking the truth, she nevertheless is not opposed to letting her imagination lend her assistance. She describes a method she employed to participate in the events of the past, to permit those long departed to speak for themselves. Adapting the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola as well as those of certain Hindu ascetics, she placed herself on the scene of events as a silent observer, emptying her mind of everything but the drama unfolding before her eyes, attaining the contemplative state of recollection in order to convey what she saw and heard in the manner of a medium.

In *Dear Departed,* she does not achieve the same result. Precisely because of the continual authorial intrusion, the reader is sharply aware that the I-narrator/commentator is speculating much of the time about the feelings and motivations of the constantly changing large cast of characters passing through the mind of the writer, whereas with Hadrian she lived in a kind of symbiotic relationship so intense and for so long that it approached, in her words, "controlled delirium."

As in all of Yourcenar's work, however, what absorbs the reader of this volume is her examination of the metaphysical questions that have always fascinated the "thinking reeds"—to use Pascal's metaphor—that we are: the universal fear of death and desire for immortality, the unity and indestructibility of all in matter, the tension between divine immanence and transcendence, the strangeness yet banality of life, the splendor and mystery of love, the unfathomable link between time and eternity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture

DAVID BARTHOLOMAE AND JEAN FERGUSON CARR, EDITORS

Word Perfect

Literacy in the Computer Age

Myron C. Tuman

How does technology affect our most basic understanding of what it means to be literate, to be educated, even to think? The guiding thesis of *Word Perfect* is that, as a society, how we generate wealth has a great deal to do with how we relate to each other and to ourselves and, in complex ways that we seldom consider, how we organize education.

1992 / 224 pp. / $49.95 cloth / $19.95 paper

Fragments of Rationality:

Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition

Lester Faigley

"A lucid presentation of various contemporary theories and . . . how they differ . . . very much like reading Foucault at his clearest and most convincing. The book is written with real authority, and it makes sense in all sorts of ways."—**James Slevin, Georgetown University**

1993 / 296 pp. / $39.95 cloth / $17.95 paper

Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness

Patricia Bizzell

The essays in this volume constitute the main body of work in which Bizzell has developed her influential and often cited ideas. Organized chronologically, they present a picture of how she has grappled with major issues in composition studies over the past decade. In the process, she sketches a trajectory for the development of composition studies as an academic discipline.

1993 / 304 pp. / $39.95 cloth / $17.95 paper

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH PRESS

At bookstores, or c/o CUP Services
P.O. Box 6525, Ithaca, NY 14851, or phone 800-666-2211.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yourcenar's mother, Fernande de Cartier de Marchienne, left French Flanders with her husband, Michel de Crayencour, where they resided on his family estate, to undergo the ordeal of giving birth to her first and only child in familiar and familial surroundings. Thus it was, in 1903, that the first woman ever to have been elected to the French Academy "happened," as she liked to put it, to be born in Brussels. Ten days after giving birth, Fernande died of puerperal fever and peritonitis. And it is this drama that is first presented to the reader.

Yourcenar (the surname is a near anagram of Crayencour) was preoccupied with death, which she defined as "the supreme form of life." In an interview with a journalist, she expressed her desire to die slowly, completely conscious of the "passage," so as not to miss the "ultimate experience." It was in this spirit, she notes, that Hadrian and Zeno, the protagonists of her novel *The Abyss*, die—"with their eyes open." To ensure a dignified encounter with this "friend," she espoused living in constant intimacy with the thought of the inevitable.

In her study of Yukio Mishima, she quotes from a Japanese treatise: "Imagine your death every morning, and you will no longer be afraid to die." There are two kinds of people, she remarks, those who drive the thought of their death out of their minds so as to live more comfortably, and those who feel it wiser and less stressful to live while watching out for death, anticipating its sure arrival. "What some label a morbid mania," she continues, "is for others a heroic discipline." Returning to this theme in *Dear Departed*, Yourcenar observes: "Our love lives are public; our death seems to be conjured out of sight." In this work, as in a number of others, she expresses her admiration for those who elect to die.

The title of the French edition, *Souvenirs pieux* (1974), translated roughly as "devotional remembrances," refers to the small cards with prayers and sometimes pious pictures, distributed by the family of the deceased for the implied purpose of requesting the prayers of the recipients for the "dear departed." (The author also chose the title of the English edition.) In both French and English, the word *pieux* (pious) carries ironic overtones of conspicuous religiosity, hypocrisy, even lack of charity. The *souvenirs pieux* of near and distant relatives, reproduced throughout the book, function as a unifying element, adding cohesiveness to the text. They are at the same time a symbol of death and continuous creation.

Although, in *With Open Eyes*, Yourcenar expresses satisfaction in the rituals, imagery, and liturgy of her Catholic origins, her aversion to what she viewed as the superficial, mechanical, tepid, sometimes superstitious religious observance of her forebears—of whom only a few "make an effort to discover the meaning of Christ's tragic sacrifice"—is clearly evident in *Dear Departed*. Their real gods, she says, are "Plutus, prince of strongboxes; the god Terminus, lord of the cadastre, who takes care of boundaries; the rigid Priapus, secret god of brides, legitimately erect in the exercise of his functions; the good Lucina, who reigns over birthing chambers; and finally, pushed as far away as possible but ever-present at family funerals and devolutions of inheritance, Libitina, goddess of burials, who concludes the procession."

Just prior to her death, Fernande instructed her husband not to let anyone prevent "the little one" from becoming a nun if that should be her wish. The daughter, seventy-one years later, observes that, late in life and in her own fashion, she has embraced religion, but that her mother's "desire has been realized in a way she doubtless would have neither approved nor understood."

While she never renounced Christ, she preferred, she has said, the beauty and mystery of Eastern thought, espousing the concept of divine immanence over transcendence. She subscribed to a "mysticism of matter," a kind of world soul present in every particle of nature, in a continual process of birth, death, and rebirth. The narrator of her powerful short story "Anna, soror" comments: "The book of creation has two interpretations, both valid: no one knows whether everything lives only to die, or dies only to be reborn." Her eulogy to her predecessor in the French Academy is essentially a hymn to nature, in which she quotes the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart: "The stone is God, but it doesn't know that it is, and it is the lack of this knowledge that defines its nature as stone."

Setting in relief the blurred boundary she saw between beginning and end, merging

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

present, past, and future, the author chose as an epigraph to *Dear Departed* the Zen koan: "What did your face look like before your father and mother met?" Where time and eternity are juxtaposed in Western thought, Yourcenar perceived a cyclical unity. In *That Mighty Sculptor, Time*, she declares: "There is neither past nor future, only a series of presents, a road, perpetually destroyed and rebuilt, on which we all move forward." *Dear Departed* ends with Fernande, presumably pregnant, reclining on a chaise longue; the writer remarks: "My face begins to take shape on the screen of time." The voyage before life, she has written, of which we know nothing, is as important as the afterlife, of which we are equally ignorant.

After the death of his wife, Michel returned to France with his infant daughter where they lived in a Europe that was still a lovely park where the privileged could stroll about as they pleased, the author notes, and where identification papers were most useful when one was calling for letters at the general delivery window. The child was educated at home by governesses and tutors. When World War I erupted, with the threat of a German invasion, they took refuge in England. After the war, the family seat having been destroyed by the Germans, father and daughter moved to the south of France. After the death of Michel, whose lineage is similarly traced in the second volume of the trilogy, *Archives du nord* (1977), at the end of which the infant Marguerite is not quite six weeks old, Yourcenar traveled extensively throughout Europe, giving serious consideration to settling in Greece. The last volume, *Quoi? L'Eternite* (1988), recounts, to a large extent, Michel's liaison with at friend who had considerable influence in the molding of the author's overview of life.

In 1939, with Europe once more in turmoil, Yourcenar accepted an invitation from Grace Frick to visit the United States. She decided to remain. With Frick, who became her lifelong companion and translator of a number of her books, she bought a house in Northeast Harbor on Mount Desert Island off the coast of Maine. This was to be her home for the rest of her life, though she continued to be a world traveler and returned many times to France.

In 1947, she became a naturalized American (taking Yourcenar as her legal name), forfeiting her French nationality. Thirty-two years later, at the suggestion of certain French notables, in order to facilitate her election to the Academie française, she petitioned to be reinstated as a French citizen. So it was that, in 1987, she died with dual citizenship. Ironically, in her heart, she was probably neither French nor American. She seemed to prefer Greek culture and liked to think of herself as kin to the universe. In *With Open Eyes*, she remarks: "I have several homelands, so that in one sense I belong perhaps to none." *Dear Departed* is at the same time a quest for roots, an examination of certain metaphysical questions, and a sustained critique of the significant cultural, political, and sociological factors of a society that, in part, spawned the author.

Wanting the World

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH: AN AMERICAN LIFE. *By Scott Donaldson. Houghton Mifflin. $35.*

Reviewed by JOHN P. SISK

We expect that the true poet will have to suffer through the ordeal of choosing between poetry and everything else, and the chances are that if he makes the right choice we will honor him, no matter what the cost to himself or others. For Archibald MacLeish the right choice was not easy; given his background and capabilities, there were too many attractive options. Choosing was additionally difficult since, as he wrote to his Yale classmate and longtime friend Dean Acheson, "Our real trouble is that we don't want anything in particular, we just want the world."

Nevertheless, in the fall of 1923, with service in World War I and his first book of poems behind him, Archibald MacLeish put aside thoughts of an academic career, rejected a position with a prominent law firm, and departed for France with his wife and two

JOHN P. SISK, Arnold Professor of the Humanities Emeritus at Gonzaga University, is the author of, most recently, *The Tyrannies of Virtue*. His essays and reviews have appeared in *Harper's*, the *Atlantic*, and other magazines.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

children. The choice was not a happy one for his business-minded father or his meddlesome Aunt Mary, who wondered: "Why should a first-rate lawyer become a second-rate poet?" However, as Scott Donaldson makes splendidly clear, the choice was very good for MacLeish's biography. But it was also very good for present readers who now have the advantage of a fresh and enriching perspective as they revisit the school for writers that Paris was in those legendary post-war years.

The choice between poetry and everything else, however, turned out to be not so final after all. The problem was not so much that the poet needed to make a living (which he did) but that he could not throw off the effects of earlier family schooling, especially that of his mother who had fixed in him "a lifelong determination to be of use." As his fellow poet Richard Wilbur would later say of him, Archie was one of "the passionate serving kind." It was not hard, then, for Dean Acheson to persuade him to interrupt his Parisian curriculum in order to go to Persia as secretary and legal counsel for a League of Nations team that had been commissioned to look into the opium trade. An unanticipated consequence of this trip was the great lyric "You, Andrew Marvell." No doubt *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish*, which with its brooding self-doubts appeared to mixed reviews two years later, had its Persian connections. So it would go from then on: courses of action that seemed hostile to the making of poetry would turn out to be the indispensable preliminaries to poems that might otherwise never have been written.

Back home after his five years abroad, practical necessity and the old compulsion to be of use combined to make MacLeish a very busy and effective public man. For nine years he was a star writer for Henry Luce's *Fortune* and for six years Librarian of Congress. For his admired friend Franklin D. Roosevelt he was a speech writer and chooser of bedtime reading. He did what he could to encourage the entry of the United States into World War II—doing his damnedest in "defense of a gang of criminals," as his cranky friend Ezra Pound put it in one of his broadcasts from Rome. Before the war was over he was an assistant secretary of state. After the war he did important work for the United Nations, served on the five-member executive council of UNESCO, and later taught successfully at Harvard and Amherst.

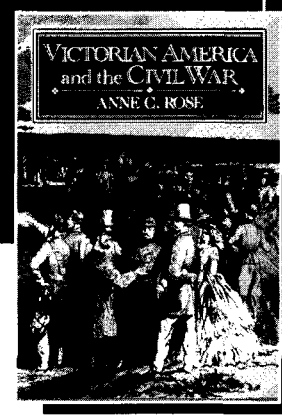
From the point of view of some of his friends (to say nothing of his enemies), MacLeish was the victim of having too many choices, most of which should have been rejected out of hand. That so few of them had been rejected would in time be Ezra Pound's good luck: without the intervention of the well-placed public man that MacLeish had become, Pound might have spent the rest of his days in St. Elizabeth's, where he had been confined in connection with his treasonous broadcasts.

MacLeish himself continued to worry about the choices he was making, but at the same time he continued to discover that the tension between poetry and everything else could be a creative one. He recognized, for instance, that his work at *Fortune* "had educated him in a way available to few other writers." Without his knowledge of the business world, he could not have written the libretto for the ballet *Union Pacific*, the poem *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City*, or the verse play *Panic* (in which the young Orson Welles starred). Special assignments took him to the American West, Europe, Asia, and South America. He was at *Fortune* when he wrote and published the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Conquistador*, which had been suggested to him during an earlier trip to Mexico. In the *Fortune* years he was learning, as he put it in his essay "Poetry and the Public World," that "in our time there was no true separation between the private and public realms." In this view, nine years at *Fortune* could be as useful to the poet as five years in Paris. It implies a position beyond that of the much-quoted ending of the earlier "Ars Poetica"—"A poem should not mean / But Be." This was too neat a disjunction for a man who had become what the historian Henry Steele Commager (a friend of his Amherst years) would later call a "service intellectual." As Donaldson points out, MacLeish's fate was to be such a person in a country where "there was no traditional career path combining literature with the commonweal."

Such a public man, anxious to be of use, was not likely to pride himself on his aloofness from the democratic process, especially in the 1930s. This is clear enough in MacLeish's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Outstanding Scholarship from Cambridge



Belonging in the Two Berlins

Kin, State, Nation

John Borneman

Belonging in the Two Berlins is a critical ethnography of the meaning of German selfhood during the Cold War. Taking the practices of everyday life in the divided Berlin as his point of departure, Borneman shows how the meaning of kin, state and nation were constructed through processes of mirror-imaging and misrecognition. He employs the tools of linguistics and narrative analysis to compare the autobiographies of two generations of Berlin residents with the official version of the lifecourse prescribed by the two German states.

Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 86

41589-6 Hardcover $59.95
42715-0 Paper $19.95

The Savage Within

The Social History of British Anthropology, 1885-1945

Henrika Kuklick

Considering the anthropological ideas of Britain between 1885 and 1945, this book explores the relationship between social scientific ideas and behavior. Professor Kuklick shows how the descriptions British anthropologists produced about the peoples of exotic cultures can be translated into commentaries on their own society. The book also shows how anthropological insight informed consideration of such specific problems as the rights of women, the Irish, and all colonized peoples.

41109-2 Hardcover $44.95

Victorian America and the Civil War

Anne C. Rose

Victorian America and the Civil War examines the relationships between American Victorian culture and the Civil War. The author argues that at the heart of American Victorian culture was Romanticism, a secular quest to answer questions previously settled by traditional religion. In examining the biographies of seventy-five Americans who lived in the antebellum and Civil War eras, elements of disequilibrium, passion and intellectual excitement are explored in contrast to the traditional view of Victorian self-control and moral assurance.

41081-9 Hardcover $29.95

Russian Popular Culture

Entertainment and Society Since 1900

Richard Stites

This book presents a side of Russian life that is largely unknown to the West—the world of popular culture. By surveying detective and science fiction, popular songs, jokes, box office movie hits, the stage, radio and television, Richard Stites introduces the people and cultural products that are household words to the Russian people.

Cambridge Soviet Paperbacks 7

36214-8 Hardcover $44.95
36986-X Paper $14.95

Available in bookstores or from

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211
Call toll-free 800-872-7423. MasterCard/VISA accepted.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poetry (critics who had earlier found it too derivative now found it too political) as well as in the essays collected in *A Time to Speak*. He was as resolutely for Roosevelt's New Deal as he was for the Spanish Loyalists. But he was just as resolutely anti-Marxist, a fact that scandalized and infuriated many on the Left at a time when their choice of Marx meant the intransigent rejection of everything else. Cleanth Brooks called *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City* MacLeish's "most ambitious successful poem," but in it the ideology of Lenin and the rapacity of J. P. Morgan are equally objectionable, which led Mike Gold to identify the poet as "an unconscious fascist." That unconscious fascist was also involved with the League of American Writers and even chaired its second congress in 1937, sharing the platform with Earl Browder. To have refused to participate because he did not like the company he had to keep would have made him one more of the irresponsibles he condemns in *A Time to Speak*, but it did him no good with the HUAC and the FBI, who did what they could to cast a shadow of doubt over his work with the government. He was an active opponent of the political simplicities of Senator Joseph McCarthy, who attacked him on television. The senator, as MacLeish's powerful verse play *The Trojan Horse* clearly implies, was as much the enemy within as the irresponsibles of the 1930s had been.

In the meantime, the involved and sometimes harassed public man continued to publish distinguished prose and poetry, sensitively selected samples of which keep the biography close to its subject. MacLeish's *Collected Poems, 1917–1952* won him a second Pulitzer Prize; he wrote verse plays for radio and television; he wrote and narrated the documentary motion picture, *The Eleanor Roosevelt Story*; and of course there was the poetic drama *J. B.*, which ran a year on Broadway and won him a Tony Award and a third Pulitzer. Impressed with the variety of his accomplishments, some called him a Renaissance man. The British critic I. A. Richards thought he had the "planetary sense." Richard Wilbur wrote that many of MacLeish's poems "are already a part of our national heritage." But there were also those (Edmund Wilson, Louise Bogan, and Morton Zabel were among them) who thought that he was too successful in too many ways and on too many social levels to be taken seriously as a poet. As Donaldson says, "It was too easy for his enemies to suppose that he must have gained recognition by calculation and expediency rather than merit."

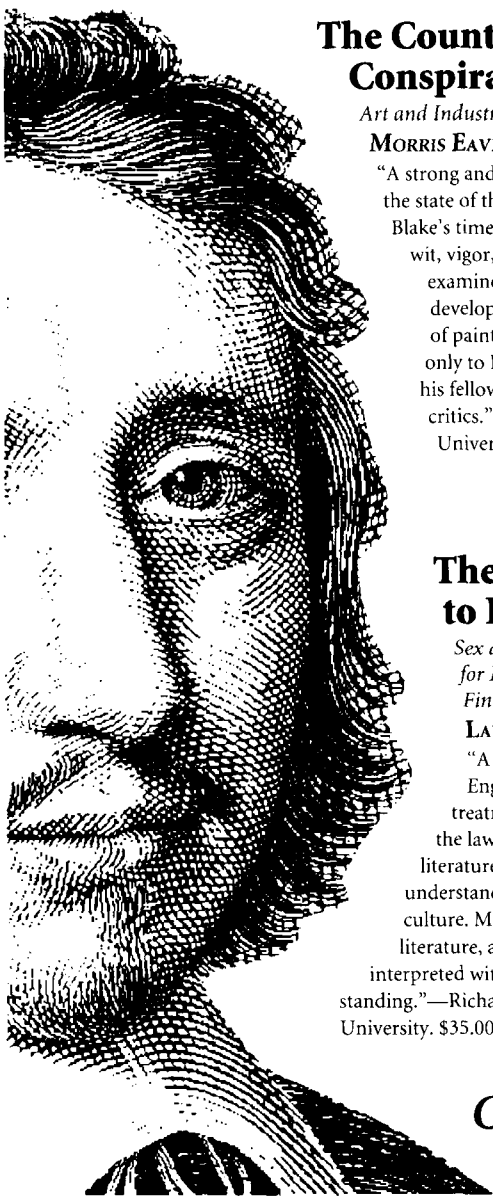
Such criticism continued to bother MacLeish. He knew his dependence on "the laudatory review, the letter of praise, the words of approbation from those in authority." Besides, he was always aware that what he said about his unpredictable friend Hemingway after the latter's death might have been said of himself: that "his life was a strange one for a writer, as we think of writers in our time." In his last years, says Donaldson, he often felt "that in pursuing his goals he had shut himself off from companionship, that in adopting a public persona he had almost lost track of himself." Certainly there were times when in his infidelities he almost lost track of his excellent wife, times too when his children suffered from the emotional distance of the kind he had experienced with his own father.

Professor Donaldson's biography of this multitalented man builds on the preliminary research of R. H. Winnick, who made available the indispensable diaries, notebooks, more than six hundred hours of taped interviews with the poet, his family and associates, and, of course, the letters (published by Winnick in 1983). One needs to keep in touch with the sixty pages of endnotes to see how effectively and with what critical tact Donaldson has organized this wealth of material.

MacLeish's story is hard to separate from the story of his times, not only because his ninety years made him coterminous with major events, themes, and pressures of our twentieth century but because he was less inclined than his peers to ration his participation in the world they shared. Faced with such a subject, the biographer himself must often be a severe rationer of information. We are constantly and tantalizingly aware that under other circumstances Donaldson might have told us much more than he does—about the years in Paris or Washington, D.C., for instance. He might, in other words, have written what Henry James, referring to Russian novels, called a baggy monster—a creature much in favor with current biographers. Here, however, a discriminate silence serves the more modest end of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Recommended Reading



The Counter-Arts Conspiracy

Art and Industry in the Age of Blake

Morris Eaves

"A strong and richly suggestive study of the state of the visual arts in England in Blake's time. With his characteristic wit, vigor, and directness, Eaves examines obstacles to the development of an English school of painting as they appeared not only to Blake but also to some of his fellow artists and to certain art critics."—Mary Lynn Johnson, University of Iowa. $37.95

The Keys to Happiness

Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia

Laura Engelstein

"A work of major importance. Engelstein makes the treatment of sex and gender in the law, in medicine, and in literature a revealing source for the understanding of Russian society and culture. Materials on law, medicine, literature, and philosophy have been interpreted with precision and understanding."—Richard Wortman, Columbia University. $35.00

Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome

Erich S. Gruen

Few encounters in antiquity have had more profound consequences than that between Greek culture and Republican Rome. Focusing on the ruling elites of the middle and later Republic, Gruen offers a compelling account of the assimilation and adaptation of Greek culture by the Romans. *Townsend Lectures. Cornell Studies in Classical Philology.* $37.50

The Search for the Gene

Bruce Wallace

From Gregor Mendel's experiments on garden peas to the mammoth Human Genome Project of today—how did we get where we are in the science of genetics? Wallace examines the concept of the gene and recounts the history of its development, providing a concise transition from genetics to modern molecular biology. A Comstock Book. $37.95 cloth, $14.95 paper

Cornell University Press

124 Roberts Place, Ithaca NY 14850

At bookstores, or call 607-277-2211 (credit card orders only)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

telling us what it was like to be Archibald MacLeish in those stirring and often soul-trying times.

Couch Potatoes

THE DIARY OF SIGMUND FREUD, 1929–1939: A RECORD OF THE FINAL DECADE. *Translated, annotated, with an introduction by Michael Molnar. Scribner's. $50.*

Reviewed by PAUL ROAZEN

A distinguished European psychoanalyst has written me that he considers this *Diary* a fraud, and his intellectual credentials are weighty enough to begin by considering the merits of his point of view. Although this large book is over three hundred pages long, the German text, reproduced here, takes up only five pages. Photographs of the original handwritten entries, combined with translations, consume just under forty pages. Publishers, who one might think were eager for Freud primary material, were initially leery that there was enough, in what the editor calls "a skeletal grid of isolated words," to constitute a real book.

Freud himself called this brief manuscript "Shortest Chronicle." Most days he wrote nothing in it, and when he chose to do so his remarks were highly elliptical. Sometimes only a name, indicating by a cross that someone had died, or else paid a visit, gets recorded. It is particularly odd, since Freud was such a great stylist, that no complete sentences appear here, just fragments of his jottings. These were the years when he was increasingly an invalid; he first fell ill of cancer of the jaw in 1923. Despite his doctors' warnings, Freud kept up with smoking his beloved cigars; inevitably much of the *Diary* has to concern operations and other medical matters.

I have now read through this book for a second time; I first saw it in France in 1991, where the galleys were sent for the sake of a French edition. It may look like the Freud Copyrights are scratching around to find money-making ventures in behalf of Freud's heirs, but the editing of the *Diary* is so exemplary as to make it, I think, a fascinating addition to the available literature. The credit for this achievement should go to Michael Molnar of the Freud Museum in London. He has painstakingly annotated all Freud's laconic remarks, and the *Diary* is really Molnar's book. Molnar has filled the post of researcher at the Freud Museum, and he has had access to all sorts of hitherto unpublished Freud correspondence. Molnar has made the *Diary* into an essential source book. Although from an outsider's perspective it might appear like misleading the public to call this material a "diary," from my own point of view Molnar's work has earned him the standing of being one of the world's great Freud scholars.

I know nothing about Molnar's formal scholarly credentials, but, as a fellow worker in the field, I have on occasion helped him answer some queries, and he duly acknowledges the assistance I offered. When I have visited the Freud Museum, located at the house where Freud died, I have stopped off and chatted with Molnar. It has been awesome for me to find a young man, working in what once was Freud's daughter Anna's house, so unencumbered with the ideological blinkers that have so often afflicted research in this field. Molnar sits at the center of a web of intersecting information, and books about the history of psychoanalysis regularly descend upon him. In my opinion he has made excellent use of the unique position he has been in.

At the same time Molnar has been laboring under a fairly obvious set of constraints. The Freud Museum, which first opened in 1986, has as its trustees the New-Land Foundation and the Sigmund Freud Archives of New York City. One director of the Museum relinquished his duties because the trustees objected to the wide range of projects that were being sponsored. The New-Land Foundation was set up with the money of Anna Freud's friend Muriel Gardiner, and the Freud Archives was the creation of Kurt R. Eissler, long a watchdog in behalf of preserving Freudian fundamentalist orthodoxy. Although Eissler fell from power in connection with the curious but short-lived tenure of Jeffrey M. Masson as projects director of the Archives, Eissler's successors have not shown much

✪ PAUL ROAZEN is most recently the editor of Helene Deutsch's *The Therapeutic Process, the Self, and Female Psychology.*

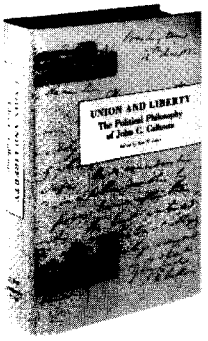
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Modern, scholarly editions of classic works for today's readers.

UNION AND LIBERTY: THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF JOHN C. CALHOUN

NEW

Edited by Ross M. Lence



"This is the finest collection in a single volume of Calhoun's important works enunciating all aspects of his political philosophy, a philosophy that profoundly influenced the course of American history. Calhoun's ideas continue to influence political discourse, and no doubt always will. All his major speeches are here. . . . Most important, all the selections are complete and unabridged. This is truly an editorial triumph." Robert V. Remini, Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois, Chicago

This outstanding collection contains Calhoun's two most significant works, the **Disquisition** and **Discourse,** together with twelve other important speeches, letters, and political essays.

626 + xxx pages, foreword, editor's note, index.
Hardcover $35.00 0-86597-102-1; Paperback $9.50 0-86597-103-X

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE

By Edmund Burke
Edited by Daniel E. Ritchie

"It is now possible to have ready and easy access to Burke's wider discussion of the French Revolution." H.T. Dickinson, University of Edinburgh

Hardcover	$25.00	0-86597-098-x
Paperback	$ 7.50	0-86597-099-8

THE AMERICAN DEMOCRAT

By James Fenimore Cooper
Introduction by H.L. Mencken

"Cooper's treatise, happily made available with an introduction by H.L. Mencken, amounts to being the 86th *Federalist Paper.*" Holmes Alexander

Hardcover	$14.00	0-913966-91-6
Paperback	$ 5.00	0-913966-92-4

To order by phone, call 317-842-0880; fax 317-577-9067. Prepayment by check, VISA, or MasterCard is required on all orders not for resale. Shipping and handling and a $15 minimum apply to credit card orders. We pay book rate postage on orders prepaid by check. Please allow approximately four weeks for delivery.

LIBERTY FUND
7440 North Shadeland, Dept. N209, Indianapolis, IN 46250-2028

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

improvement in opening up material to independent-minded scholars. Eissler is still in charge, as Anna Freud's personal representative, of much documentation that she deposited, through the vehicle of the Archives, at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. So that when Molnar mentions, in his acknowledgments, "the essential derestriction" of Freud's "Shortest Chronicle," one does wonder what under the circumstances the word *essential* has to tell us. Molnar reports that this "derestriction" is "in accord with the present policy of The Sigmund Freud Archives of derestricting previously classified documents," even though to my knowledge this amounts so far merely to a pious set of promises for the future.

The notes at the back of the *Diary* are riveting, and I reread them with the greatest interest. Molnar, for example, quotes from a variety of unpublished Freud letters and cites a wide range of documents that are lodged at the Freud Museum. Yet even Molnar has not gained access to some material that is still restricted by the Freud Archives at the Library of Congress, some of which is sealed until the twenty-second century. Molnar mentions an interview located at the Library of Congress that will not become accessible until 2007.

Although Molnar is on the whole, given his position at the Freud Museum, remarkably emancipated in his editorial remarks, I nonetheless found evidence of the existence of limits on his research. I am not referring to mistakes and omissions, which are bound to occur in a work such as this. It would seem that Molnar showed portions of his work to a relatively small group of people in London, when one would have guessed that the text should have benefited from the widest possible circulation before publication.

The failure to pass around the *Diary* among relevant scholars reflects a degree of hesitancy about just how far it was possible to go in the direction suitable for satisfying the demands of impartial scholarship. For example, certain key matters remain disguised or unspoken. Ruth Mack Brunswick was one of the leading figures in Freud's final decade, and her name comes up in the *Diary* at a number of points. Yet the most explosive aspects of that story are not repeated here. No mention is made of her having become addicted to drugs while under Freud's care. Nor is she credited with having been the analyst of Max Schur, who was Freud's private physician in these last years. Nothing is said of the circumstances surrounding her tragic early death in 1946. The *Diary* does contain an impressive full-page photograph of Ruth holding her child, Mathilda, who was named for Freud's eldest daughter, and Molnar quotes Freud's writing to one of his sons that Ruth "almost belongs to the family." But Molnar is too reticent about the full story connected with Ruth, who was simultaneously in analysis with Freud along with her husband, Mark, and her brother-in-law David.

Although I suspect that reasons of statecraft, connected with the welfare of the orthodox psychoanalytic movement, lie behind Molnar's reticence about Ruth, the *Diary* takes on a somewhat wooden quality when it concerns certain people whom Molnar never knew personally. The analyst Hermann Nunberg, for instance, was notoriously difficult for people to get on with, but because he remained loyal to Freud, there is no hint here of just how eccentric Nunberg was. And Robert Waelder, a theoretician who was divorced from everyday human emotions, gets cited as an authority when one would have thought his opinions were deeply suspect.

The Scribner's editor, Robert Stewart, under whose auspices this *Diary* appeared, conducted interviews of his own in the mid-1960s with those loyal to Anna Freud's point of view. But Molnar cites that interview material far too much and in an uncritical way. For example, when Stewart asked Anna Freud why the gestapo had arrested her in 1939, she merely responded: "Oh, but they arrested everybody!" Such a comment, although palpably untrue, would have been suitably safe for a tape-recorded interview with Stewart. But in fact it should be made clear that the Nazis then were primarily interested in investigating the complicated international finances connected with Freud's publishing house. It reads lamely to be told by Molnar that the gestapo "suspected the International Psychoanalytic Association of being a subversive movement directed against them." Molnar correctly notes that the assets of the psychoanalytic press had to be declared and its many affairs liquidated. My own interpreta-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion of Anna's arrest is that it would not be unexpected, or out of keeping with what any intelligent Viennese of the time would have done, if Freud's son Martin, in charge then of his father's finances, had violated formal rules about where Freud's money was being kept.

Molnar only mentions in passing that Anna Freud had been personally analyzed by her own father; this is referred to as a "training analysis," although for Freud there never was a substantial difference between therapy and training. Freud's having analyzed his own youngest child meant a violation of all the technical rules that he laid down for others to follow. He had his reasons, and presumably Anna was fully complicit in the undertaking, but something more should have been said here about this. It is also known that in turn Anna Freud analyzed her nephew Ernst, who went on to be an analyst himself; although a good deal about that Freud grandson appears in the *Diary,* there is no mention of who it was who treated and trained him.

Nonetheless, the notes are a rich storehouse of unpublished material about Freud. For example, there is a striking quotation there by Julius Tandler, a medical contemporary of Freud's. Tandler persuasively commented about Freud's character and personality in a 1931 private memorandum:

> The level of the drives is of unprecedented strength in him, this person is never free of his drive. Even in a spiritual state of mind he is not free of drives. . . . A hard person. It is uncanny in such an old man, this vital strength, this sexual strength, this saturation of his vessels with sap. This person is so rooted in his physical being that the intellect has repeatedly to find points of contact with the physical. This must be expressed in his intellectual work. . . . He is a person who is only accountable to his own law, who only lives according to its direction and who cannot subordinate himself to rules. He is incapable of adapting to a mould because of his proportions. Without a doubt a person who influences his time. If he were not a Jew he might be Bismarck.

While Molnar would seem, in citing at least parts of this source, to be aware of Freud's forcefulness, somehow he has accepted the myth that Freud stopped attending the meetings of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society because of the first occurrence of his illness in 1923. In fact, contrary to what Molnar repeats, Freud was not "too ill to take part in full

INCHARDI

Novels by J. Inchardi
$20 each

Lines On The Death Of A Fisherman

Three Jews In A Tub

Dreamship

Yurros

A Paper Toy

Intercurse

Jehovah Mafioso

Saturn Maru

Drek Shlak

Om Budsman

The Execution Of Comrade X

The Resurrection Of Philippe D.

The Ascent Of Maryam

Order from Sirius Books
P.O. Box 177
Freeport, Maine 04032

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

discussions," but Freud did not want to mobilize any further rivalries and emotional transferences by participating too closely in the doings of his followers.

The *Diary* contains some fascinating glimpses, thanks to Molnar's editing, of Freud's view of the various members of his immediate family. One longs to know, however, exactly what Freud wrote about each of his children, and in particular what Freud had to say in connection with his son Oliver, who for a time was analyzed in Berlin by one of Freud's correspondents there. Although we know so much about the various public controversies in Freud's life, Molnar is entirely correct to remind us of Freud that "virtually his entire lifetime was spent within large families."

The *Diary* is strangely naive, especially considering that this is a Robert Stewart book, about the publishing circumstances under which the Hogarth Press in London became Freud's publisher. All the evidence indicates that Leonard Woolf was exceedingly parsimonious in doling out money to Freud and that in the end Hogarth made a great deal out of publishing Freud and other analysts. Molnar somehow tells us that the commitment of the Woolfs at Hogarth represented "a considerable risk and one which the new publishers undertook against expert advice."

Molnar ought to have been a good deal more skeptical not only of how far out people were when they joined up with Freud, and what sort of realistic risks they were running, but he should have been more on his toes about Freud's penchant for using diagnostic categories for people whose behavior he disapproved of. The Viennese Hans Lampl, married to one of the favorites in Freud's final phase, is said by Molnar to have been "suffering from irrational moods—possibly even psychotic episodes." But the truth of the matter is that Lampl was in a realistic struggle against his wife's consuming involvement with Freud; he wanted a marital partner, and when he protested against how for her everything centered on Freud, the circle around Anna Freud decided that he was paranoid and should get himself analyzed. The emotional links between Anna and her father were such that he, too, shared this conviction. Lampl's analyst, however, concluded that it was sound jealousy on his part and, though he was not a brilliant man, he had known when to assert himself lest dedication to Freud deprive himself of a wife.

No doubt I have dwelled too much on the occasional lapses in the editing of this book. The photographs, many of which have never been published before, are well chosen. Only the most painstaking scholarship could take the cryptic words of Freud's "shortest chronicle" and transform it into a document that will be a primary source for years to come. Intellectual historians will be indebted to Molnar's unusually fine work.

Going Bananas

THE EGALITARIANS—HUMAN AND CHIMPANZEE: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEW OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION. *By Margaret Power. Cambridge University Press. $44.95.*

Reviewed by JOEL E. COHEN

Since biblical times, animal societies have served as mirrors and models for human societies. The author of Proverbs (6:6, 30:25) praised the industry and wisdom of the ants. For some people today, insect societies remain influential metaphors for human societies. The development of the theory of evolution in the nineteenth century led to interest in the societies of man's closest living relatives, the nonhuman primates (monkeys and apes)—and chief among these the great apes (chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans). Knowledge of the primates promised to shed light on the origins and underlying nature of human society.

In 1932, Solly Zuckerman published his observations of a group of baboons in the London zoo. His influential book, *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes*, depicted a hierarchical baboon society in which bigger, more powerful animals dominate weaker animals by means of aggression. That contentious image prepared subsequent scientists to see dominance and aggression in field studies of non-human primates under less artificial con-

✪ JOEL E. COHEN is professor of populations at Rockefeller University, New York.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ditions than those of the London zoo.

Considering that our closest surviving kin is probably the chimpanzee (though the gorilla contends for this honor), it is astonishing that field studies of chimpanzee behavior and society are so recent. In 1931, H. W. Nissen reported on sixty-four days of field observations. The first field studies of chimpanzees to last longer than sixty-four days began in 1960, when three independent workers launched projects: A. Kortlandt in what is now eastern Zaire; Junichiro Itani in the Mahale Mountains, Tanzania; and—best known to the public in Europe and America—Jane Goodall in what is now Gombe National Park, Tanzania. These and subsequent long-term field studies have produced extraordinary and unexpected details about the private and social lives of many individual, identified chimpanzees and chimpanzee groups.

Margaret Power's new book, The Egalitarians—Human and Chimpanzee, is not another field study of chimpanzee behavior and society. Much more ambitious, it attempts to reorganize our understanding of the detailed data of previous chimpanzee field studies. In what is apparently her first book, published at the age of seventy-one, Power paints a persuasive picture of the two chief longitudinal chimp field studies, those at Gombe and Mahale, as unintended trials of the effect of a simple human intervention on chimpanzee society. The human intervention entails provisioning: the offering of limited, centralized food baits, under human control, to attract the chimps for more convenient human observation. The effect of this intervention on chimpanzee society is enormous and dramatic.

Before the intervention, which occurred around 1965 at Gombe, and around 1968 at Mahale, chimpanzees practiced what anthropologists of human societies call an immediate-return foraging system. Members hunt or gather in dispersed, small groups from dispersed, small food sources. They consume the food obtained the same day or within a few days. Food is not processed elaborately, and any tools that may be used are simple and locally made, without much investment of labor. Individuals do not depend on second or third parties for access to food, water, or sex. The probability of conflict between individuals is minimized because each individual can easily shift from one small foraging group to

SPENCER BAIRD OF THE SMITHSONIAN

E. F. Rivinus and E. M. Youssef

Recounting the life and achievements of a great naturalist, educator, and builder of institutions, this biography reveals that Baird (1823–1887) — the second secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and the first U.S. commissioner of fish and fisheries—actively charted much of the direction and content of 19th-century science and museums. Baird founded the now-world-famous Marine Biological Station at Woods Hole, Mass.; served as supervisor of the Bureau of American Ethnology; and was the first director of the United States National Museum, which he personally persuaded Congress to create.

Rivinus and Youssef explore Baird's character and motivations, placing the details of his professional and personal life against the larger stage of politics, science, and culture and the founding of the Smithsonian Institution.

50 b&w illus. 288 pp. Cloth: 1-56098-155-5H $29.95

THE UNIVERSAL MAN

Theodore von Kármán's Life in Aeronautics

Michael H. Gorn

"Recounts the range of scientific and social accomplishments of the man who pioneered the use of applied mathematics in aeronautics and astronautics. Von Kármán was also the moving force behind NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Caltech's Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory, and the USAF Scientific Advisory Board." —*Science News*

49 b&w illus. 215 pp.
Cloth: 1-56098-165-2H $24.95
Smithsonian History of Aviation Series

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION PRESS
Dept. 900 • Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17294-0900 • 800/782-4612 • 717/794-2148

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

another. Each adult is autonomous. Within a group, leadership shifts from one adult to another, depending on the needs and the willingness of others to follow at the moment. The dominant emotional tone is relaxed and positive. Mostly positive behaviors between members, and occasional peacekeeping interventions, are all there is to the social structure. This picture of chimpanzee society is based on naturalistic methods of observation that do not substantially affect the behavior being observed.

Unfortunately, naturalistic methods are extremely costly in human time and effort. Shy wild chimpanzees tend to slip away when they notice that a human observer is approaching. Because of the difficulty of following and observing chimpanzees using only naturalistic methods, the projects at Gombe and Mahale started to attract chimpanzees with substantial food baits that were kept under the control of the human observers.

At Gombe, in one of several systems of feeding that were tried, concrete feeding boxes were sunk into the ground; the boxes had steel lids that human observers could control by means of underground wires. The intention was to assure that the expensive imported bananas in the bait boxes went to the chimps and not to the local baboons, and that each chimp had one box of bananas each day. The effect of this provisioning was to generate individual frustration (as chimps saw and smelled bananas they could not eat), aggression between individuals, and social disruption. According to Power, Goodall reported that

> the constant feeding was having a marked effect on the behaviour of the chimps. They were beginning to move about in large groups more often than they had ever done in the old days. They were sleeping near camp and arriving in noisy hordes in the morning. Worst of all, the adult males were becoming increasingly aggressive. When we first offered the chimps bananas the males seldom fought over their food; they shared boxes. . . . [Now] not only was there a great deal more fighting than ever before, but many of the chimps were hanging around camp for hours and hours every day.

Independent researchers began to work at Gombe in June 1967. Power notes (her emphasis):

> *All studies carried out at Gombe, other than Jane Goodall's pre-1965 work, are of chimpanzees that had already experienced prolonged, human-imposed interference with access to a desired food.* By 1967, the interactions and relationships of the Gombe apes were very different from those reported by Goodall in the four years before 1965, and it was in 1967 that the systematic, much relied on, data bank was begun.

(A pessimist might suspect that the unintended effects of provisioning, as described by Power, illustrate a general constraint that governs scientists who study organisms nearly as complex as themselves: the easier an experimental intervention makes it to study a social system, the less likely it is that the behavior observed is the behavior originally of interest.)

A key insight of Power is that chimps and humans share a genetic potential for *both* kinds of society, relaxed and egalitarian or aggressive and hierarchical. The expression of one or the other mode of behavior is strongly influenced by the abundance and distribution of food in the environment. When fruiting trees of a given species are scattered and come into fruit at different times, small foraging groups compete indirectly by eating fruit in the absence of other groups. The home ranges of different groups overlap amiably. By contrast, when desired food is available at a single place in limited supply for limited times, direct conflict and frustration vented in aggression pit the strong against the weak.

Power details the contrasts between chimp social behavior reported by naturalistic field studies and provisioned field studies, and she compares the naturalistic observations with anthropological reports of six human societies organized as immediate-return foraging systems. She concludes that "the fundamental adapted form of social organization of humans and chimpanzees is egalitarian and based on positive behavior and a relationship of mutual dependence between autonomous actors shifting between fundamental leader-follower status/roles." In such societies,

> the positive form of self-interest is not a struggle for superiority or advantage, but for personal well-being, self-esteem. If enlightened self-interest was [*sic*] normally a struggle for superiority—which involves higher and lower rank, privilege and status—the foraging system could not have endured, as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it has from humankind's beginnings to a short 10,000 years ago. Nor could it endure among chimpanzees, as the disintegration of the Gombe group demonstrates.

The archetype of human society, Power argues from this, was painted better by Rousseau than by Hobbes.

This book will meet diverse receptions colored by the ideological preconceptions of its readers. Those who benefit from a competitive, power-oriented society are likely to greet with skepticism Power's view that the earlier, less systematic, more limited data from naturalistic field studies describe the true prototype of chimpanzee and human societies. Those whose sympathies lie with a less hierarchical and aggressive society, with more symmetrical roles for males and females, are likely to receive warmly her suggestion that the immediate-return foraging system is prototypical for chimpanzees and humans. For me, Power's analysis of the data is as persuasive as a retrospective interpretation of a finite set of data can be expected to be. Strong confirmation can come only from further naturalistic and provisioned studies of chimpanzees under relatively undisturbed circumstances. Such studies will be possible only if the chimpanzees continue to survive in the wild. On the desirability of that, I suspect Power and Goodall would agree.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The editor of *The Journal of Information Ethics* (published by McFarland & Co.) would like to hear from potential contributors. *JIE* is a new, semi-annual periodical that deals with ethics in all areas of information or knowledge production and dissemination. This includes, but is not limited to, library and information science, education for these professions, technology, government publication and legislation, graphic display, computer security, data base management, peer review, privacy, cyberspace, and information liability approached from sociological, philosophical, theoretical, and applied perspectives. Please query before sending a manuscript. Contact Robert Hauptman, Editor, *The Journal of Information Ethics*, LRS, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN 56301. (612) 255-4822

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR
SALE OF
SELECTED BACKCOPIES

A limited number of backcopies of *The American Scholar* are being offered at a reduced cost per copy. Following is a list of issues available for $2.50 per copy *plus* shipping charges:

Pub. Year	Vol. Number	Issue Number
1973	Vol. 42	No. 4
1974	Vol. 43	No. 3
1979	Vol. 48	Nos. 2, 4
1980	Vol. 49	Nos. 1, 4
1981	Vol. 50	Nos. 1, 2, 4
1982	Vol. 51	Nos. 1, 2
1983	Vol. 52	No. 4
1985	Vol. 54	Nos. 1-4
1986	Vol. 55	Nos. 2-4
1987	Vol. 56	Nos. 3-4
1988	Vol. 57	Nos. 1-4
1989	Vol. 58	Nos. 1, 3
1990	Vol. 59	Nos. 1-3
1991	Vol. 60	Nos. 1-2

Send your request specifying year, volume, and issue numbers to:

BACKCOPY SERVICE
The American Scholar
1811 Q Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

DO NOT SEND PAYMENT. You will be billed for the cost of copy(ies) plus shipping charges.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Reader Replies . . . . . .

Adam Smith

The title of Adam Smith's book is *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. As Professor McCraw observes in "The Trouble with Adam Smith" (Summer 1992), "two-thirds of the book's total of one thousand pages are concerned with detailed investigations of the economic policies in different countries at different epochs." There are so many pages because that is Smith's subject. He writes:

> Nations [of about equal] skill, dexterity, and judgement . . . have followed different plans in the [application of labor] and the plans have not all been equally favorable to the greatness of its produce.
>
> China seems to have . . . long ago acquired the full complement of riches which is consistent with the nature of its laws and institutions. But this complement may be much inferior to what, with other laws and institutions, the nature of its soil, climate, and situation might admit. . . . The poverty of the lower ranks of people in China far surpasses that of the most beggarly nations of Europe. (From chapter 9 of Book 1.)

Our present public opinion is pessimistic about helping the poor—partly in fear that some useful suggestion will raise taxes. Some of us believe there is a well-tested answer to the question of poverty: the "laws and institutions" of impoverished subcultures are substantially inferior to those of the wider, affluent society. I think Smith was on the right track devoting "two-thirds of his book" (Professor McCraw) to "plans in the application of labor" (Adam Smith).

Professor McCraw is correct that Smith overestimated the importance of agriculture. It seems only fair to add, though, that his position represents a large advance over that of Turgot, Quesnay, and other French intellectuals who gave even more importance to agriculture. Smith may not have moved far enough but he was headed in the right direction.

JOHN E. CONNOR
Strafford, Pennsylvania

Professor McCraw's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* is an admirable attempt to do justice to a seminal text whose nuances and ramifications are inexhaustible and whose relevance continues to grow. I would agree with Professor McCraw that conflict between Smith's laissez-faire theory, that economies are better off with markets left alone, and mercantilism, that governments should actively promote national industries, is not merely a theoretical conflict of interest to economists alone. The mercantilist policies of Japan and Germany are paid for by their respective taxpayers and consumers through the operations of market forces that are beyond government control. The same is true of the "laissez-faire" policies of the U.S. government, which are really mercantilist policies best summed up by the slogan, "Buy American," adding a patriotism tax to every new car or suit of clothes.

Adam Smith's contribution to the science of economics was to cut through the obscurantism of economic theory and focus on the practical consequences of social interaction, based on a universalist concept of human nature that is, unfortunately, out-of-date. His work stands apart from that of his contemporaries and successors, not because he anticipates the needs of the industrial state, but because of his extreme distrust of politicians, rooted in a common-sense regard for facts. How much of this "naive" distrust is lost on economists today is demonstrated by Professor McCraw's support for a "national economic strategy" that focuses on the organization, not the individual, on technology rather than the spirit of enterprise that creates it. It should be obvious that the "national economic strategies" of producer-oriented economies (POE) can succeed only if consumer-oriented economies (COE) are willing to buy their goods. It should be equally obvious that the consumer-oriented economies must produce something to sell the POE's in return.

A nation with a 38 percent tax on capital gains will never be able to produce enough goods and services to balance its accounts with the Germanys and Japans, much less the new "tigers" of the East. It will be forced to maintain its livelihood by selling its resources, not just farmland, shopping malls, and commercial towers, but factories, factory workers, colleges, and universities, all made attractive by the fact that they are so unproductive (as witnessed by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the "multi-cultural" products of our universities today). With its material and human resources in an essentially dormant state, the standard of living of the COE must decline, calling into question its credit worthiness and sending up a cry from the POEs for fiscal responsibility. The result will be to cut military expenditures, rather than sacrosanct entitlement programs, reducing the COE to a second-rate power (which may be the point of "national economic strategy," a payback for the American Century, a "revenge of the nerds"). No wonder the brewer, the butcher, the baker, Adam Smith's individualists, have all but disappeared from the American scene today. They are sitting in front of their Sony televisions with their Hostess Twinkies and their cans of Bud Lite, waiting for the start of the Olympic Games.

ROBERT M. KORNFELD
Chicago, Illinois

American Fiction in the Cold War

I am more than a little stunned to learn from Professor Paul Bauer in the Summer 1992 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR that my "unremarkable" little book, *American Fiction in the Cold War*, is symptomatic of all that's bad with the academy! Holy smokes!

Most of Bauer's misunderstanding results from a failure to distinguish between the rhetoric of fiction and the facts of history. Nowhere in my book do I assert that Stalin was a fiction. The horrors of that particular history are never questioned: my study concerns how that history was used by postwar liberals to affirm a tragic, timeless view of human nature, and to assert the naivete of political intervention in social affairs. Bauer is so affronted by this focus that he can't get interested in the ways the ADA redefined liberalism so as to capture the 1948 presidential election, much less the ways this renewed (Christian) view of human depravity helped create a moral fiction for the 1950s.

Perhaps because of this reactionary fervor, Bauer misquotes me repeatedly: the phrase about Ellison's writing being "indistinguishable from centrist discourse" is part of a subordinate clause that pivots to the sentence's declaration: "Ellison's redefinition of social reality emerged from interests and experiences very different from those of Southern Agrarians and disenchanted white liberals" (91); Henry Louis Gates says Ellison is "Eurocentric," not me (94); and the remark that Ellison's view of art "seems at once naive and reactionary" is also part of a sentence that Bauer chooses not to complete: "but once relocated within the discursive context from which it emerged, the separating of art and politics becomes a more complex event, and regains some of its original plausibility" (95). For the record, I have written admiringly of *Invisible Man* as a fiction that speaks to all men and women (see *New Essays on Invisible Man*, ed. O'Meally, 1988); what I sought to do here is provide a more historical reading that situates Ellison's great achievement within the nuances of postwar discourse in the U.S.

But such distinctions and nuances are dismissed by Bauer as emanations from the entrenched Left. For Bauer, evidently, a scholar ruins the academy who doesn't admit the realism of the Christian faith (in fact, that such faith seemed then to be "realistic" is exactly what I do argue), or concur with George Bush and Ronald Reagan that America has won a glorious battle against the Evil Empire. Critical developments in the academy emerged, in part, in response to the realization that so many of the assumptions supporting literary scholarship collapse—as Bauer's do—the distinction between historical facts and how they are represented. When we keep this distinction before us, we understand that we are entertaining points of view; if we do so with particular goals in mind we call this "pragmatism"; when we confuse such points of view with Truth, we become agents of an ideology. For my generation the ideology of American exceptionalism was painfully exposed by the Vietnam war, when the pieties of American defense against a communist horde were shown to be the vehicles of a military-industrial complex running on automatic. Bauer's review of my book is symptomatic of a conservative reaction attempting—successfully as far as I can tell—to rewrite recent history so that it will conform to the simplistic oppositions of Cold War analysis that led to Vietnam.

But to say this does not make me a Marxist or a deconstructionist, and only someone in the throes of Bauer's reactionary hysteria could possibly think so. Certainly Bauer should know better, since he is a recent Ph.D. from Duke, the current cynosure of Marxist criticism in the United States. It may help to say that what really guided my book were questions concerning literary history: how one can write it, what would constitute a "history," how to historicize novels that "advertise" themselves as transcending the historical context from which they emerged—or, to allude to Wayne Booth once more: how to disclose the rhetoric of the fiction. One could read a good deal of fiction published in the fifties, as I did growing up, and never learn anything about its contemporary social history. I wanted to see if I could argue the presence of that history—as an "intertext"—within texts that presented themselves as "existential" or "mythic" or "picaresque"—the typical terminology through which it was obligingly critiqued.

That much intertextual scholarship can be shown to have distant relations with Marx I would not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deny. Nevertheless as an Anglo-American empiricist, one of my secondary goals in writing the book was to try out an intertextuality that made use of, rather than dismissed, empirical evidence. I hoped to develop convincing arguments in a rather old-fashioned way—one that no self-respecting Marxist or deconstructive theorist would countenance. Far from being a symptom of all that's ruining American education, the book's arguments proceed on a basis hostile to the speculative character of European theory, and faithful to standards of disinterested humanist inquiry—which Bauer rightly believes are under attack by some in the university. I meant it to be a book that would be convincing to "old" historians as well as "new" and I think it is.

In any case, no one should take consolation—as Bauer does—in the hope that students are paying less attention to their teachers than they used to; if we think that current educational curricula are doing damage to the ideals of disinterested humanist inquiry we must speak up in departmental meetings and curriculum committees, and we must participate in our local school boards to make sure that such inquiry is valued and taught. But we should not seek to teach particular ideas, or to proscribe those who dare to complicate them.

THOMAS HILL SCHAUB
Department of English
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, Wisconsin

PAUL BAUER replies: Professor Schaub's letter comes close in itself to proving the point I was making in my review of his book: that there is in fact an entrenched Left in our universities that is so monolithic in its understanding of recent history that any attempt to drag them kicking and screaming back to a reasonable, centrist position must be shouted down. According to Schaub, it seems, to have argued that Cold War anti-Communism, far from being a hallucination of the paranoid Right, was a fundamentally moral position of which we as Americans should be proud—to assert, in other words, that economic and political freedom is good, and communism was bad—qualifies me as a "reactionary hysteric." Need I say More?

A few notes, however, may be in order:

First, I never in my review call Schaub a Marxist. I do call him an "academic liberal." Draw your own conclusions. Methinks he doth protest too much.

Second, I never in my review call Schaub a deconstructionist. I do say that he "utilizes the jargon of deconstruction," which is a much different thing. In fact, I wish he was one: personally, I think deconstruction could be a powerful tool for criticizing the utopian ambitions of the Left, particularly regarding centralized economic planning, and conservative critics have shot themselves in the foot in attacking it. Down at Duke, Stanley Fish, whose work depends largely on the chief insights of deconstruction, is assailed at least as much by the academic Left as he is by the right-wing popular press, and conservatives would do themselves a favor if they asked why.

Third, I did not argue that all scholars should "admit the realism of the Christian faith." I am personally not a Christian, if that matters. I am, however, constantly appalled by the way many in the academic community routinely ridicule Christians, Catholics and Evangelicals in particular, in terms which, if applied to other religions, would be immediately recognizable as bigotry. But I do not want to accuse Professor Schaub, and I'm sure he's as aware of this distressing double standard as I am, and will bring it up in a departmental meeting in the near future.

Finally, what bothers me the most about many of the well-intentioned humanists who populate humanities departments in our universities is that they are so selective in their sympathies. Quick to champion the causes of some oppressed peoples, they for too long willfully neglected the cause of the peoples who were oppressed under communism. But suffering is suffering. So, when, after all that has happened in the past few years, Professor Schaub can still sneer at Ronald Reagan for calling the Soviet Union an Evil Empire—to me the one unequivocally true thing he said—he shouldn't wonder when people challenge his intellectual, if not his moral, integrity.

EDITORS' NOTE

Please accept our apologies for the poor quality of the print in the Autumn 1992 issue. Progress seems to have spun out of control, as not infrequently happens, this time in the name of so-called desktop publishing. We are devoted to correcting the problem. Meanwhile, we are grateful for the generous spirit of those who wrote to us about it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCREENING HISTORY

GORE VIDAL

"a delight from cover to cover..

[It] is conversational, unpredictable...A thoroughly enjoyable memoir cum cultural and political analysis." —Dave Wood, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*

"unadulterated Vidal and a small gem...

On almost every page of *Screening History* there is an observation worth admiring whether it is about Hollywood and television, politics and history, or the paranoia and hypocrisy of the commercialized American dream." —Herbert Mitgang, *New York Times*

"vibrant...

a reminiscence of Mr. Vidal's first 20 years (1925-45), with a dual emphasis on the impact of films and of gossipy Washington politics on boy Gore...If the book belongs to a genre, it is the one that includes Eudora Welty's wonderful *One Writer's Beginnings*."

—Michael Kammen, *New York Times Book Review*

"a charming, curmudgeonly collection of lectures...

Vidal traces his own history and that of this country through the historical genre films of the '30s and '40s." —Jane Mendelsohn, *Village Voice Literary Supplement*

"witty and sweepingly disrespectful...

Mr. Vidal's provocative meditations on perceptions of history are based on his Massey Lectures, at Harvard...Written versions of history are, in Mr. Vidal's opinion, no more to be trusted than movie versions, and a lot less memorable besides being a lot less fun. " —*The Atlantic*

The William E. Massey Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization

$14.95 cloth24 halftones

Harvard University Press

Cambridge, MA 02138 (617) 495-2480

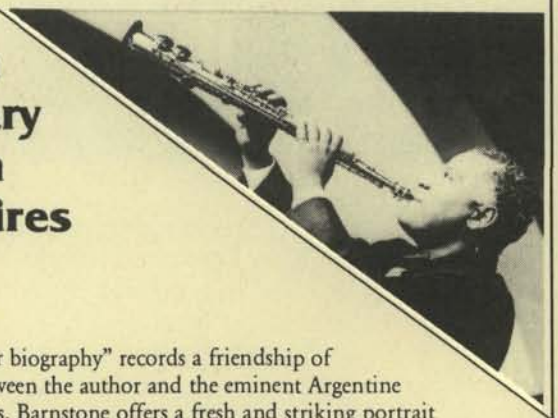
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Creation of Jazz

Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America

Burton W. Peretti

Peretti presents a fascinating account of how the racial and cultural dynamics of American cities created the music, life, and business that was jazz. This is the first comprehensive analysis of the role of jazz in its formative years. "A splendid social history of jazz from 1890 to 1940.... His scholarship is awesome." – Charles Joyner, author of *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community*. Illus. $29.95



With Borges on an Ordinary Evening in Buenos Aires

A Memoir

Willis Barnstone

This engaging "memoir biography" records a friendship of nearly two decades between the author and the eminent Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. Barnstone offers a fresh and striking portrait of the sage in his later years and includes translations of some of Borges's later poetry. "A rich portrait of a passionate but gentle genius." – Richard Burgin, author of *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges*. Illus. $25.95

Citizens against the MX

Public Languages in the Nuclear Age

Matthew Glass

Foreword by Robert N. Bellah

In late 1979 President Jimmy Carter approved the deployment of the MX weapons systems across millions of acres of Great Basin land in Nevada and Utah. Glass recounts the story of the citizens' struggle against the national security bureaucracy. "A pathbreaking study of a grassroots campaign.... The ideas of Max Weber, Jürgen Habermas, and Josiah Royce are brought to bear in original and challenging ways." – Paul Boyer, author of *By the Bomb's Early Light*. $29.95

Order toll free 800/545-4703

University of Illinois Press

54 East Gregory Drive • Champaign, IL 61820

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED